

THE PHILIPPINES' FIRST TECH LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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MAGAZINE

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Sport 4x4 AT :
A Second Look

COVER STORY

Revisiting Hybrid
Learning: Lessons
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The Rise of Microlearning
Platforms

As AI Enters the Classroom,
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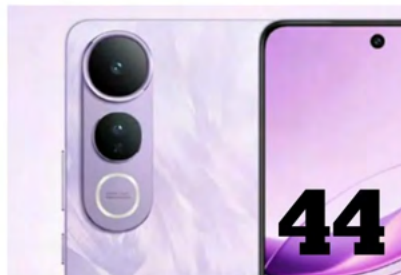
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REVISITING HYBRID LEARNING

LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC

Words by Gabriel Pe



HYB
BLEN
LEAR

When the world came to a halt in 2020, schools were forced to reimagine education virtually overnight. The pandemic ushered in a new era of learning, with educators and students turning to the internet and video conferencing platforms like Zoom and Google Meet to keep the academic wheels turning. It was a rapid, makeshift response—far from perfect, but enough to maintain a semblance of continuity amid global uncertainty.



In those early months, remote learning was held together by trial and error. Schools scrambled to find platforms without time limits. Students, many of whom had never used these tools before, struggled to adapt. Hardware and software limitations quickly became apparent. But the most persistent challenge was connectivity. For countless students, unreliable internet infrastructure created insurmountable barriers to keeping up with lessons.

Fast forward to 2025, and the effects of that disruption still ripple through the education sector. While born out of crisis, the pivot to digital instruction has reshaped the classroom in ways that

continue to evolve. Modular learning remains in use, hybrid setups are now commonplace, and distance learning has proven to be a flexible fallback in emergencies.

Hybrid and Blended Learning: A Closer Look

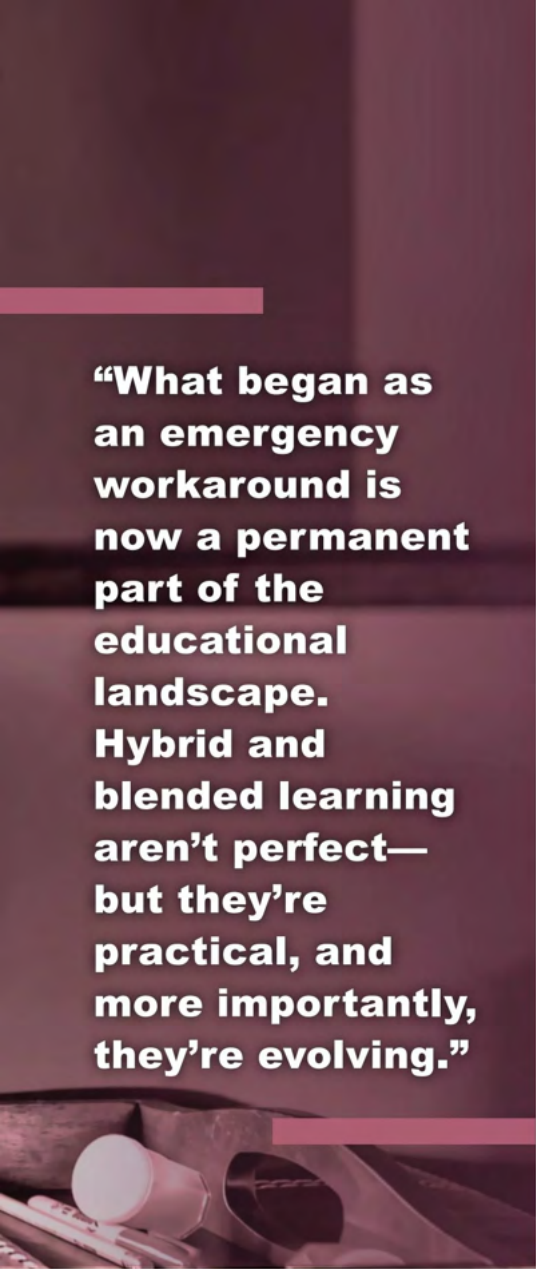
Hybrid and blended learning aren't new concepts, but the pandemic accelerated their adoption across all levels of education.

Hybrid learning combines face-to-face instruction with real-time online participation. This allows students who are not physically present to attend the

same class alongside their on-site peers. Though often confused with blended learning, hybrid learning is distinct in that it merges the two formats simultaneously.

Blended learning, by contrast, integrates in-person instruction with asynchronous online content and activities. It's a model that allows teachers to enrich lessons with digital resources while maintaining traditional classroom engagement.

Both models are now fixtures in Philippine schools, though hybrid learning is more commonly seen in higher education institutions due to the



“What began as an emergency workaround is now a permanent part of the educational landscape. Hybrid and blended learning aren’t perfect—but they’re practical, and more importantly, they’re evolving.”

technological infrastructure required. Livestreaming lectures, maintaining interactive platforms, and ensuring seamless audio-visual integration are all prerequisites.

Blended learning, on the other hand, is more widely practiced across educational levels. It leverages existing devices and the expansive resources of the internet. But like all digital-first approaches, it isn’t without challenges—chief among them, unequal access to devices and reliable internet, particularly in public schools or rural areas.

To bridge the gap, schools have implemented a mix of distance learning

strategies. These range from printed modules and take-home assignments to TV and radio-based instruction, ensuring inclusivity despite hardware constraints.

From Stopgap to Standard

In the years following the pandemic, a hybrid-distance learning format has taken root in higher education. Many colleges and universities now follow a rotational schedule, with some days reserved for in-person learning and others conducted remotely. This flexible model not only allows for continuity during unexpected events but also makes teaching more accessible for professionals and older faculty who prefer to avoid daily commutes.

Primary and secondary schools, too, have embraced remote learning as a go-to contingency. In recent months, as Metro Manila experienced record-high heat indexes, schools were quick to shift to distance learning to safeguard student health. It’s become a reliable solution during natural disasters, from typhoons to volcanic eruptions, minimizing academic disruption.

Opening Doors for Lifelong Learners

Perhaps one of the most promising developments is the growing ecosystem of online and hybrid programs for professionals. Universities like the University of the Philippines now offer short courses designed to boost credentials. Globally, institutions like Harvard, MIT, and Cambridge have long supported open university models—now, local universities are catching up.

Many postgraduate programs now feature a hybrid setup: online lectures combined with in-person exams or submissions. Even traditionally rigid institutions like law schools have adapted. The Legal Education Board (LEB) has extended its hybrid class policy until Academic Year 2024–2025 and is currently reviewing survey results that may shape the long-term future of flexible legal education.

For working professionals, the hybrid model removes one of the biggest obstacles to pursuing further education—time. While many graduate programs are held on weekends, this often competes with family or personal time. Hybrid setups allow learners to balance academic goals with everyday responsibilities, attending evening classes or online sessions at their convenience.

The Future of Learning is Flexible

What began as an emergency workaround is now a permanent part of the educational landscape. Hybrid and blended learning aren’t perfect—but they’re practical, and more importantly, they’re evolving. These modalities represent a shift from rigid, location-based education toward a more flexible, inclusive, and responsive system.

The classroom of tomorrow may no longer be bound by four walls. And as we continue to refine what works and improve what doesn’t, hybrid learning could very well become the foundation for a smarter, more resilient future in education.



THE RISE OF MICROLEARNING PLATFORMS

Words by Phia Manuell Layoso



Imagine learning something new while waiting in line for a milk tea or on a short break between classes. Instead of scrolling and watching random videos, you're learning a math trick or reviewing a history lesson—in just five minutes. It's microlearning. It's a new way of learning in short, focused lessons on demand on your phone, tablet, or computer. For today's busy students (and even busier teachers), it's a breakthrough.

Gone are the days when learning only happened inside the classroom with thick textbooks and hour-long lectures. With microlearning, education becomes more flexible, more engaging, and honestly, more fun. In this article, we'll explore how this rising trend is transforming the way Filipino students learn and how teachers can use it to make their classes even more effective. Whether you're preparing for a test or looking for creative ways to teach, microlearning may be the hidden advantage you didn't know you needed.

But what is microlearning, and how is it revolutionizing learning and teaching?

What is Microlearning?

Microlearning is a technique for presenting educational materials in short, bite-sized courses, typically ranging from only a few minutes in duration. Microlessons might come in the style of short video clips, quizzes, infographics, flashcards, or small articles. But what's particularly potent about it is that it can be accessed via smartphone, tablet, or computer, at any time and any place.

Think of it like learning while scrolling through your phone, watching a 5-minute video on fractions while waiting for your ride, or taking a quick quiz on Filipino history during your break.

Why Students Love It

For many K-12 and college students, learning can sometimes feel overwhelming. Microlearning helps by making lessons more digestible. Here's how it helps students:

- **Short and Sweet:** You get to the point—no lengthy lectures, only what you need to learn.
- **Easy Access:** Courses are accessible on mobile apps and websites, ideal for self-learning.
- **Better Retention:** As the lessons are concise, students are more likely to retain.
- **Flexible Schedule:** You can learn whenever you have a few spare minutes—before bedtime, during travel, or after lunch.

Popular microlearning sites in the Philippines such as **Quipper**, **Khan**

Academy PH, **FrontLearners**, and even **YouTube EDU creators** are producing short lessons specifically designed for Filipino learners. Some sites even have gamified learning—where you get points, badges, or rewards for finishing lessons.

How Teachers Benefit Too

Teachers are not left behind. Microlearning benefits them in several ways:

- **Digital Tools for Teaching:** Most sites offer pre-made resources that simplify lesson planning.
- **Time Saver:** Rather than spending time crafting long lectures, instructors can provide short modules as add-ons or pre-class exercises.
- **Progress Tracking:** Instructors can track how students are doing on micro-quizzes and activities.
- **Professional Growth:** Microlearning tools are also available for teachers themselves—providing short training modules in teaching methods and classroom technology.

Real Impact on Learning

Research and feedback indicate that microlearning promotes lifelong learning—a state of mind in which individuals are more receptive to acquiring something new on a daily basis. Microlearning also assists learners struggling with conventional approaches by presenting customized and interactive means of learning.

For instance, a student having difficulty learning math in class can rewatch short videos until the concept

becomes clear. A teacher seeking to be innovative with teaching a science concept can locate microlearning clips or digital activities to help lessons become more engaging.

Challenges to Consider

Microlearning is not without its flaws, of course. Limited access to gadgets and the internet could be a limitation for some students. It isn't intended to substitute for whole lessons or in-depth discussion either. But combined with traditional approaches, it is an incredibly valuable tool for modern learning.

Microlearning is more than a fad—it's a revolution in learning. Microlearning empowers teachers and learners alike by transforming learning into flexible, enjoyable, and efficient bites. Whether it's refreshing on algebra or gaining classroom management expertise, microlearning provides an intelligent approach to expanding your knowledge with a series of bite-sized lessons.

So the next time you take out your phone, watch a brief lesson—your next class might just be a bit easier.





AS AI ENTERS THE CLASSROOM WHERE DOES THE GOVERNMENT STAND?

Words by Aljhelyn Piador

AI is no longer knocking on the doors of Philippine classrooms, it has already walked in. From basic education to universities, artificial intelligence is reshaping how students learn, how teachers teach, and how decisions are made. But amid the buzz of innovation, one critical question lingers: Where does the government truly stand, not just in policy statements, but in practice, in priorities, and in protecting equity and ethics?

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A Revolution, or Just a Technocratic Band-Aid?



In February 2025, the Department of Education (DepEd) launched the Education Center for AI Research (E-CAIR). Framed as a hub for innovation, E-CAIR's mandate spans personalized instruction, data-informed policymaking, and streamlined school administration. It's a bold step aligned with the government's push for a "modernized" education system.

Tools for Early Detection, or New Risks in Disguise

Take, for instance, DepEd's Project SABAY (Screening using AI-Based Assistance for Young Children), which seeks to identify developmental delays in young learners using AI. The initiative functions through the collection of data from various sources, teacher and parent observations, results from digital assessments, and possibly even behavioral cues captured via audio or visual inputs. These data streams feed into machine learning systems trained to detect patterns that may point to developmental issues.

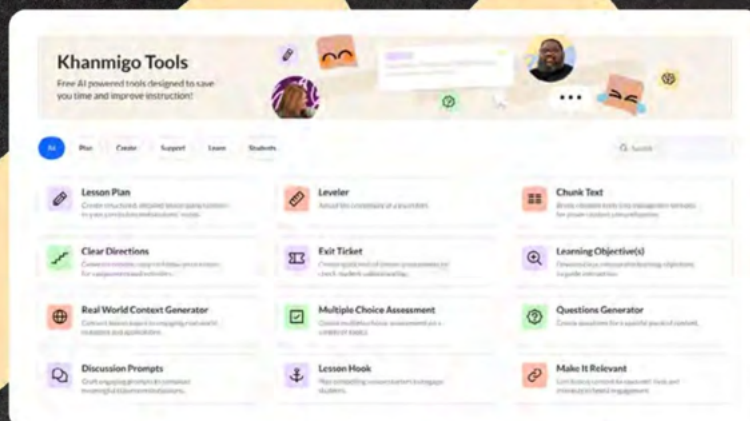
However, the output is not a definitive diagnosis. Instead, the AI provides probabilistic risk assessments, essentially flagging students who may need further evaluation by specialists. Automating these initial screenings could drastically reduce delays in intervention. More impressively, the system is designed to adapt over time, refining its accuracy



through longitudinal data collected for each student, potentially enabling more precise support strategies.

This may sound like a leap forward, but without sufficient infrastructure or access to specialists, especially in underserved schools, the benefits may be unevenly distributed. What begins as a tool for early detection could become a source of misclassification if used without proper oversight or understanding.

Platforms, Power, and Pedagogy



This interplay of promise and concern continues with the integration of AI-powered platforms like **Microsoft's Reading Progress and Reading Coach**. These tools assess oral reading skills by transcribing speech, identifying fluency issues such as mispronunciations or omissions, and delivering immediate, personalized feedback. Teachers receive dashboards summarizing both individual and class performance, enabling more targeted literacy instruction.

Similarly, **Khan Academy's AI assistant, Khanmigo**, enhances learning by guiding students through complex concepts using natural language processing. It engages them in conversations, helps generate ideas, and prompts them toward deeper critical thinking. Beyond students, it also offers support to educators, suggesting instructional materials and monitoring learning progress.

But the widespread use of these foreign-owned platforms raises significant questions about sovereignty, data ethics, and educational

philosophy. Who owns the data being generated? Who is responsible when the AI errs? And what values are embedded within these algorithmic tutors?

When these systems are plugged into schools with little local oversight, there's a risk of normalizing pedagogical models that do not reflect Filipino contexts. In essence, we may be importing not just tools but entire ideologies about what learning should look like.

Beyond ideology, there's also the question of cultural fit. Most of these AI platforms are designed with Western learners in mind. Often monolingual, digital-native, and guided by specific learning models. Yet in the Philippines, classrooms are multilingual, diverse in learning contexts, and rooted in localized experiences. If these AI systems aren't trained or adapted to accommodate indigenous languages, regional dialects, or culturally relevant content, they risk reinforcing educational exclusion. In short, the tools may be "smart," but they may not be locally intelligent.

AI tools in the hand of students

While teachers are using AI platforms for instruction, students are also exploring these tools independently, raising new challenges. However, their increasing use also raises questions about academic integrity and long-term skill development. In some cases, students may rely too heavily on AI, completing tasks without fully engaging with the material.

A thoughtful response would involve establishing clear, national guidelines on how AI should be used in education. This includes defining acceptable forms of assistance, helping educators recognize AI-generated content, and integrating AI literacy into the curriculum. Teaching students to use AI responsibly, not as a replacement for effort but as a tool for learning, can help strike the right balance.

At present, most efforts are centered on innovation and infrastructure. Discussions around ethical use and responsible practices are emerging but remain limited.

Bureaucratic Speed vs. Systemic Gaps

The promise of AI extends beyond the classroom into the administrative machinery of education. E-CAIR envisions AI helping predict enrollment trends, identify students at risk of dropping out, optimize resource distribution, and automate routine tasks such as report generation or application processing. In theory, this means teachers can spend more time teaching and less time buried in paperwork.

Yet again, the reality is layered. Many schools, especially in rural areas, lack the infrastructure to even begin implementing these systems. Without adequate investments in hardware, connectivity, and teacher training, the gulf between schools will only widen. Efficiency, in this context, becomes a privilege.



Quiet Moves in Higher Education

While much of the national spotlight is on DepEd's basic education programs, higher education institutions are also exploring AI integration. The University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU) stands out with its proactive approach. In 2024, it issued some of Southeast Asia's first academic guidelines on ethical and responsible AI use. Learning analytics, AI-assisted grading, and customized curriculum pathways are gradually being explored within the framework of student rights and institutional integrity.

However, beyond pioneering institutions like UPOU, most universities lack a coherent strategy for AI adoption. The Teacher Education Council's review of the pre-service curriculum to incorporate AI literacy is a move in the right direction, but systemic change remains elusive. The momentum is there but without national coordination, progress risks becoming isolated and uneven.

Learning from the World: What Other Countries Are Doing

Internationally, many governments have taken a proactive approach to managing the intersection of AI and education—an approach the Philippines can draw lessons from.

Developing AI literacy has been a key strategy. Countries like South Korea aim to incorporate AI into curricula at all levels by 2025, while Singapore is investing in training programs for teachers to build confidence and understanding of AI tools. Japan takes a different route by encouraging the use of AI errors as learning opportunities, nurturing critical thinking rather than blind acceptance of algorithmic outputs.

At a more strategic level, nations like China, the UK, and India have incorporated AI in education within their broader national AI strategies. Governments have backed this up with public funding for AI research and infrastructure. Australia and New Zealand, meanwhile, offer national guidelines while empowering schools with implementation autonomy.

Adopting these models in the Philippines would require tailored adaptation. Local infrastructure disparities must be addressed to avoid deepening the digital divide. National AI literacy initiatives must also consider multilingualism, cultural nuances, and the limitations in teacher training systems. Still, many principles like ethical clarity, inclusive policymaking, and investment in teacher training can guide local policymakers toward a more coherent and equitable AI agenda.

Unwritten Rules and the Path Forward

With the growing number of AI-powered initiatives in education, the Philippine government needs a comprehensive, enforceable framework to guide implementation. For instance, pilot programs make headlines, but what happens after the pilot phase ends? Who ensures that ethical standards are met across all regions? And who is held accountable when AI systems fail or cause harm?

These are not just technical or procedural concerns, they strike at the core of democratic governance in education. When AI tools are used to monitor student performance, allocate resources, or shape how learning is delivered, values such as transparency, inclusivity, and accountability must not be optional; they must be fundamental.

Efforts are underway in the legislature to modernize education and equip the workforce with essential digital skills for an increasingly AI-driven society. Proposals are being considered to embed digital skills and technology training directly into the national curriculum from the foundational levels. The goal is to ensure students are prepared for a future significantly influenced by artificial intelligence.

Concurrently, there is also significant focus on digital transformation. One proposed initiative champions dedicated AI education for government employees. This aims to ensure that policymakers and those implementing new technologies have a solid understanding of AI tools and their implications. Another proposal emphasizes the integration of digital and AI literacy throughout the basic education system. This effort is particularly focused on addressing existing skill gaps and promoting equitable access to digital knowledge.

These legislative proposals collectively highlight a growing recognition that successful integration of AI requires not only technological infrastructure but also strong governance, comprehensive training programs, and a well-defined ethical framework.

Still, amid the questions and growing doubts, there is reason for optimism. Other countries have shown that it is possible to integrate AI in education ethically, equitably, and effectively. The Philippines doesn't need to reinvent the wheel, it needs the political will to adapt global best practices to local realities. The real challenge is not the technology itself, but how we choose to shape it.

ASUS Gaming V16 and X16

Laptops

PHP74,995 – V16 (V3607VM-RP524W)

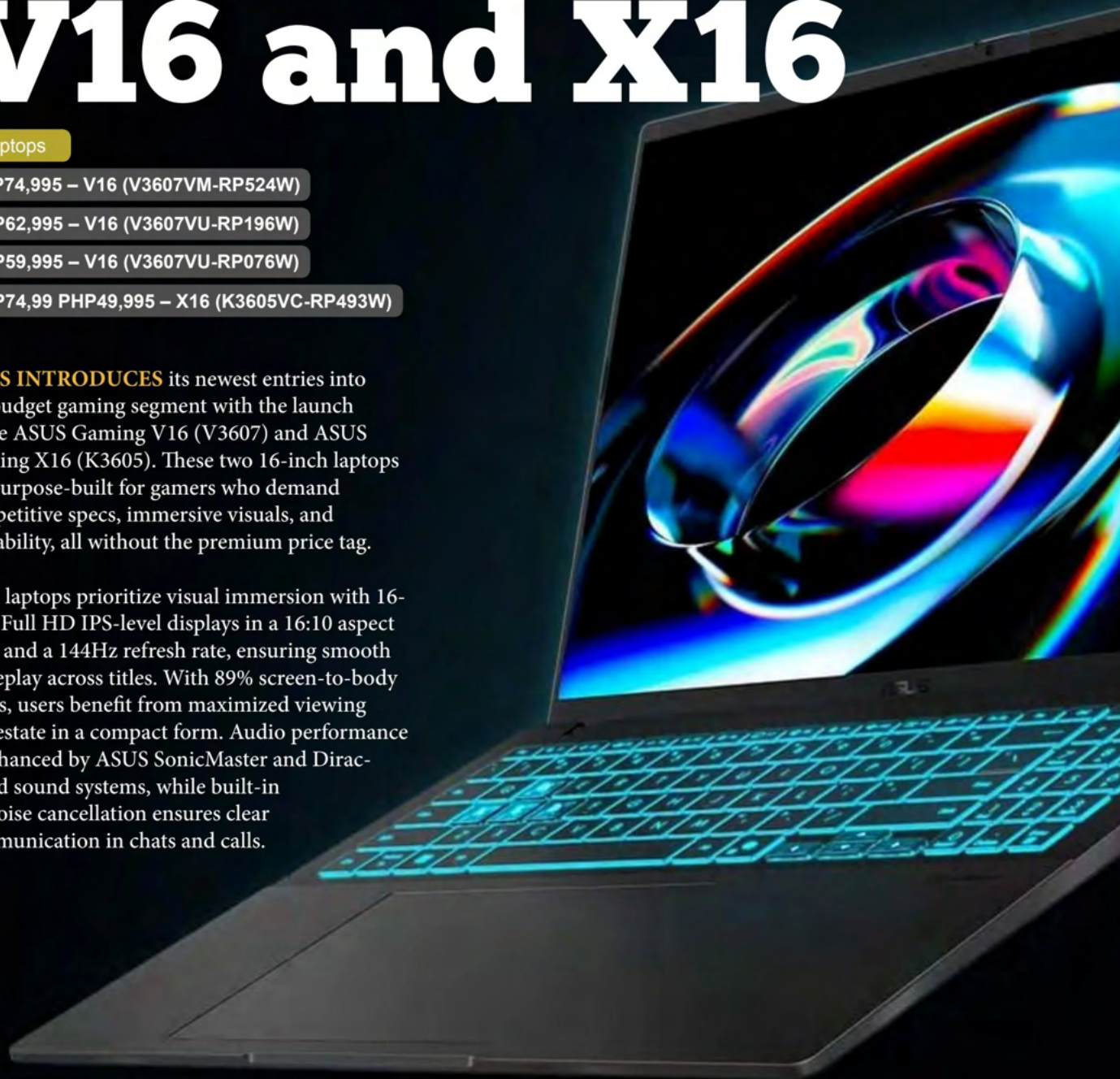
PHP62,995 – V16 (V3607VU-RP196W)

PHP59,995 – V16 (V3607VU-RP076W)

PHP74,99 PHP49,995 – X16 (K3605VC-RP493W)

ASUS INTRODUCES its newest entries into the budget gaming segment with the launch of the ASUS Gaming V16 (V3607) and ASUS Gaming X16 (K3605). These two 16-inch laptops are purpose-built for gamers who demand competitive specs, immersive visuals, and portability, all without the premium price tag.

Both laptops prioritize visual immersion with 16-inch Full HD IPS-level displays in a 16:10 aspect ratio and a 144Hz refresh rate, ensuring smooth gameplay across titles. With 89% screen-to-body ratios, users benefit from maximized viewing real estate in a compact form. Audio performance is enhanced by ASUS SonicMaster and Dirac-tuned sound systems, while built-in AI noise cancellation ensures clear communication in chats and calls.





ASUS IceCool thermal technology

ASUS Gaming V16 (V3607)

At the heart of the ASUS Gaming V16 is the Intel Core 5 210H processor (Series 2), paired with up to an NVIDIA GeForce RTX 5060 GPU with DLSS 4 support. With up to 16GB DDR5 memory and 512GB PCIe 4.0 SSD, this configuration offers fluid multitasking, quick load times, and support for demanding gaming sessions. The system also integrates Wi-Fi 6, Bluetooth 5.3, a 63Wh battery, and ASUS IceCool thermal technology for sustained performance during extended gameplay.

The X16 variant, which is slightly thinner and lighter at 1.80 kg, runs on an Intel Core i5-13420H processor and is equipped with up to an NVIDIA GeForce RTX 3050. It features 8GB DDR4 memory (expandable), a 50Wh battery, and the same 144Hz display. Its SD card reader adds utility for creators and gamers managing external media.

Both models feature comprehensive I/O, including USB Type-A and Type-C ports, HDMI 2.1, audio combo jacks, and dedicated DC-in jacks. The X16 adds an SD 4.0 card reader for expanded use cases. Aesthetically, both feature backlit keyboards, larger precision touchpads, and visual accents, such as neon-highlighted WASD keys, to suit gaming preferences.

Design remains a focal point, with the V16 housed in a Matte Black chassis measuring just 1.8cm thin and weighing 1.95kg. The X16 opts for an Indie Black finish and is slightly slimmer at 1.89cm and 1.80kg. Both offer durable construction rated to military-grade MIL-STD-810H standards.

Prices vary depending on the processor, GPU, and RAM configurations. All models ship with Windows 11 Home, a 2-year international warranty, 1-year accidental damage protection, and a 3-month PC Game Pass.

With competitive specs and thoughtful design, the ASUS Gaming V16 and X16 stand out as reliable choices for aspiring gamers and mobile professionals alike.

ASUS Gaming X16 (K3605)







Fujifilm instax WIDE Evo

Hybrid Instant Camera

PHP22,599

FUJIFILM has unveiled the instax WIDE Evo, a new hybrid instant camera that combines the nostalgia of instant film with the versatility of digital photography. Designed to offer wider perspectives and creative freedom, the instax WIDE Evo stands out as a compelling choice for photography enthusiasts and content creators who want to elevate their storytelling.

As a hybrid camera, the WIDE Evo enables users to shoot digitally, review images on its built-in LCD screen, and select the best ones to print. It also functions as a smartphone printer, allowing users to wirelessly print photos straight from their phones. Its standout feature is its ability to produce large-format instax prints, providing more room to capture expansive scenes and expressive moments.

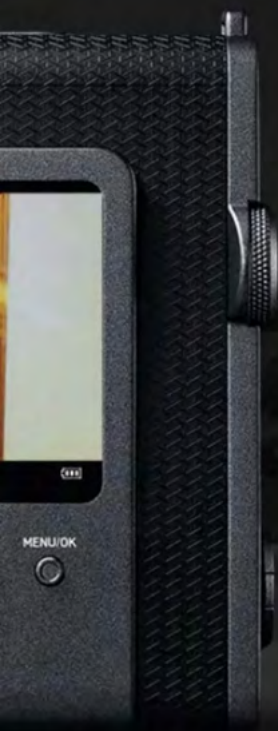
A key innovation in this model is the Degree Control system—offered for the first time in an instax camera—which lets users fine-tune lens effects and film styles with a high degree of precision. With 10 lens effects (including “Magenta” and “Monochrome”) and 10 film styles (like “Light Leak” and “Color Gradient”), users can mix and match for up to 100 shooting combinations. Degree Control further

enhances customization, allowing users to adjust elements such as light intensity and color gradation in 100 levels, enabling more nuanced creative expression.

Physically, the WIDE Evo exudes a premium aesthetic, blending a sleek black base with metallic accents. It features tactile, analog-style controls, including dials for effect selection and a manual crank for printing photos, bridging digital convenience with nostalgic interaction.

Another strength lies in its dedicated mobile app, which includes a Discover Feed. This feature lets users browse instax photos shared online, view the creative settings used, and replicate them directly on their camera via Bluetooth. The app also enables easy saving and sharing of printed images with an instax frame, enhancing social media engagement.

For users seeking a camera that blends aesthetic control, hybrid functionality, and the charm of wide-format film, the instax WIDE Evo delivers. It offers more than 100,000 possible visual expressions, catering to creative professionals and casual users alike who want to transform everyday scenes into shareable works of art.





HONOR Pad X9a

Tablet

PHP10,999 – unit only

PHP11,999 – with Smart Bluetooth Keyboard

WITH THE GROWING demand for accessible yet powerful tech tools, the HONOR Pad X9a emerges as a well-rounded option that blends AI-enhanced performance with premium features. Positioned as a go-to back-to-school companion, this tablet combines entertainment, productivity, and sleek design in a lightweight package.

Tailored for students, professionals, and tech-savvy users, the Pad X9a supports multitasking and online collaboration with ease. At the heart of its appeal is a vibrant 2K FullView

Display, offering crisp visuals ideal for streaming, reading, and remote meetings. Paired with immersive audio capabilities, it's designed to deliver a well-rounded multimedia experience, whether for study breaks or late-night binge sessions.

AI-powered enhancements set the Pad X9a apart in its class, allowing it to adapt to user behavior and optimize daily tasks. With intelligent power management, smart connectivity, and an intuitive user interface, the device offers more than just baseline tablet performance—it

provides intelligent support for both academic and creative workflows.

With its strong mix of affordability and innovation, the HONOR Pad X9a embodies the brand's goal of democratizing smart technology. It offers users a reliable, stylish, and future-ready device at a time when hybrid learning and flexible work arrangements demand more from mobile hardware. For anyone searching for a functional yet affordable tablet that delivers on both form and function, the Pad X9a stands out as a smart choice.

HONOR X5b Plus

Smartphone

PHP4,999

POSITIONED AS an entry-level smartphone that doesn't skimp on capability, the HONOR X5b Plus blends functional design with performance-driven specs to meet the essential demands of today's connected user.

At the heart of the HONOR X5b Plus is the MediaTek Helio G36 (12nm) octa-core processor, backed by 4GB of RAM and HONOR RAM Turbo technology, allowing for expanded memory performance equivalent to 8GB. Storage won't be an issue either, with 128GB of internal memory expandable up to 1TB via microSD—enough room for apps, multimedia, and documents.

Its 6.56-inch HD+ TFT LCD display supports a 90Hz refresh rate and reaches 530 nits of brightness, offering users smoother visual performance for scrolling, browsing, and streaming. Color accuracy and brightness levels are tailored for typical daily use, even under bright daylight conditions.

Photography is powered by a 50MP AI Ultra-clear main camera, offering crisp, detailed shots across varied lighting conditions. It's complemented by a 5MP front-facing camera designed for clear video calls and selfies.

One of the standout features of the HONOR X5b Plus is its 5,200mAh battery, which enables extended use throughout the day. With 10W wired charging via USB-C, the phone recharges reliably. Combined with Android 14 and HONOR's MagicOS 8.0 interface, users can expect an optimized software experience focused on ease of use and battery efficiency.

Connectivity features include Dual SIM support, 4G LTE, dual-band Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 5.1, a USB Type-C port, and a 3.5mm headphone jack. Security and accessibility options include a side-mounted fingerprint sensor and facial recognition. The device weighs 194g and measures 163.85 x 75.75 x 8.7mm, striking a balance between screen real estate and one-handed usability.

Offered in Midnight Black and Ocean Blue, the HONOR X5b Plus presents itself with a sleek and subdued aesthetic. It's a well-rounded package for users seeking a dependable smartphone with the essential modern features—whether for work, play, or staying in touch.



HUAWEI FreeArc

Wireless Earbuds

PHP4,999

DESIGNED FOR ACTIVE LIFESTYLES, the HUAWEI FreeArc combines secure fit, sound clarity, and intelligent design in a lightweight, durable form factor. Engineered with summer adventures in mind, these open-ear wireless earbuds deliver a compelling balance of comfort, performance, and convenience.





FreeArc is built with a C-Bridge design and a 140° optimal triangle structure that locks the earbuds securely in place—even during high-impact activities. Its S-shaped curves and droplet-shaped earhooks conform to natural ear contours, delivering a personalized fit. The construction uses skin-friendly, hypoallergenic liquid silicone and a 0.7mm Ni-Ti shape-memory alloy, making the earbuds exceptionally flexible, breathable, and comfortable for all-day wear.

Fitted with a 17x12mm driver unit and enhanced by a dynamic bass algorithm, the FreeArc delivers immersive audio with deep bass and sharp clarity. Adaptive equal-loudness tuning ensures balanced output across all frequencies. The open-ear design lets users stay aware of their surroundings—ideal for both indoor productivity and outdoor mobility. Advanced sound leakage control keeps your listening experience private, even in public settings, while multi-EQ modes allow for tailored sound profiles suited to music, video, or work calls.

Whether you're answering a call on a windy beach or in a noisy commute, the FreeArc ensures your voice comes through clearly. It features a dual-mic setup, triple noise cancellation, and

4m/s wind-noise resistance, making it ideal for communication on the go. Smart antenna technology extends stable connectivity across 400 meters and maintains performance in spaces up to 100 square meters, thanks to its anti-interference system.

With an IP57 rating, the FreeArc is HUAWEI's first true wireless stereo (TWS) earbuds built to resist water and sweat. It's tough enough for intense workouts, poolside lounging, or unexpected summer rains—making it a reliable audio companion wherever your plans take you.

Dual Device Connection enables users to shift between devices—such as switching from a laptop to a phone—without manual reconnection. The earbuds are fully compatible with both Android and iOS platforms. Touch controls offer intuitive functionality: swipe to adjust volume, double tap to play/pause or answer/end calls, triple tap to skip tracks, and long press to access voice assistants or reject calls. It's a seamless, screen-free experience that keeps you in control.

The FreeArc supports up to 7 hours of playback on a single charge and up to 28 hours total with the charging case. A 10-minute top-up provides up to 3 hours of use.

Infinix NOTE 50 Series

Smartphone

PHP8,999 - NOTE 50

PHP11,999 - NOTE 50 Pro

PHP17,999 - NOTE 50 Pro+ 5G

THE INFINIX NOTE 50 SERIES is redefining the mobile gaming experience with a trio of powerful models—NOTE 50, NOTE 50 Pro, and the NOTE 50 Pro+ 5G. Designed in partnership with *Call of Duty: Mobile*, these smartphones deliver next-level specs to FPS gamers seeking seamless performance, elite responsiveness, and long-lasting power in a sleek metal frame.

At the core of the NOTE 50 Pro and NOTE 50 Pro+ 5G is a performance-first architecture, built to meet the demands of high-frame-rate gaming. The NOTE 50 Pro comes equipped with up to 24GB Extended RAM and 256GB internal storage, offering fluid multitasking and uninterrupted gameplay. Its 144Hz Eye-Care Ultra-High Refresh Rate Display ensures fast response times and smooth animations, vital for first-person shooter (FPS) titles like *Call of Duty Mobile*.

Charging is equally cutting-edge. The NOTE 50 Pro supports 90W wired and 30W wireless fast charging, allowing users to recharge quickly between matches. Battery life is optimized to support extended gaming sessions, minimizing downtime and maximizing screen time.

For those seeking flagship-tier performance, the NOTE 50 Pro+ 5G steps it up with a D8350 chipset and 5G connectivity for reduced latency. It features an upgraded charging system with

100W wired and 50W wireless fast charging. The device retains the high 144Hz refresh rate and metal-frame durability, offering a polished yet performance-heavy gaming phone capable of handling long hours of competitive gameplay.

All models in the NOTE 50 Series run on the latest Android platform with guaranteed OS updates for up to two years. This ensures access to the newest features, security patches, and an evolving user interface that stays current over time. Select models also support Google's Circle to Search—an intuitive AI tool that allows users to draw a circle on the screen to search objects or text instantly.

The devices offer a polished visual identity, available in Titanium Grey, Enchanted Purple, Shadow Black, and Racing Edition variants. These aesthetic choices are paired with premium metal-frame construction, making the phones not just visually appealing but structurally solid.

By integrating advanced gaming features, fast-charging capabilities, and high-end display technologies, the Infinix NOTE 50 Series positions itself as a strong contender in the mobile gaming segment. Built for speed and engineered for immersion, it's a compelling option for FPS gamers seeking performance without compromise.





OPPO Pad SE

Tablet

PHP12,999

OPPO is expanding its tablet ecosystem in the Philippines with the introduction of the OPPO Pad SE—an affordable yet power-packed device designed to support the modern Filipino's drive for productivity, creativity, and balance. Bridging career, school, and entertainment needs, the Pad SE positions itself as a versatile choice for those seeking more from their mobile technology.

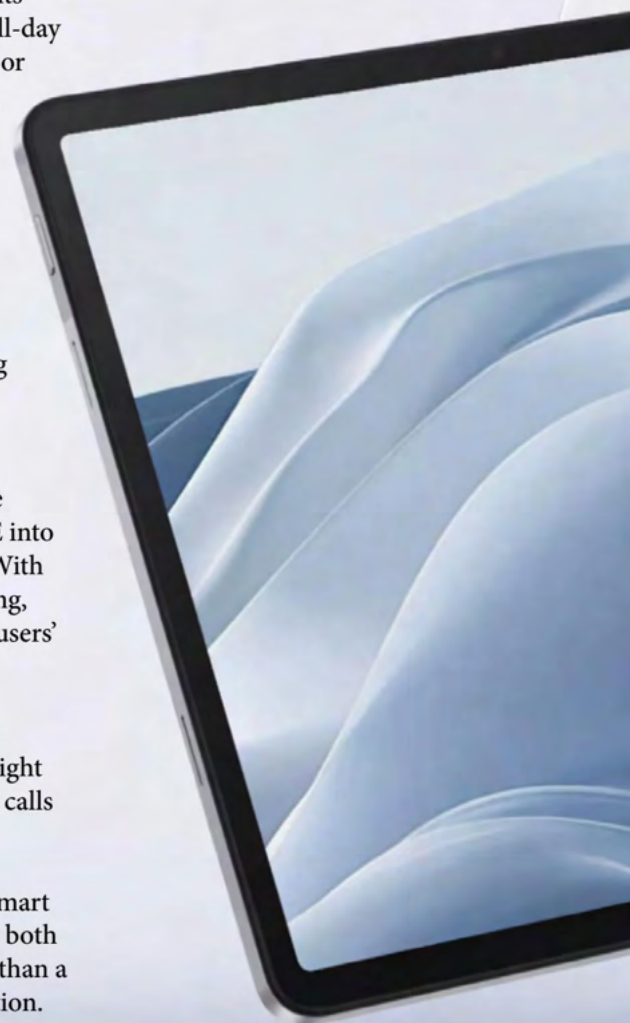
Anchored in the brand's ethos of practical innovation, the OPPO Pad SE is engineered for extended use without compromise. A standout feature is its massive 9,340mAh battery—the largest in its price segment—ensuring all-day functionality whether you're working remotely, attending online classes, or streaming in your free time. Coupled with an 18W fast-charging system, the device offers dependable performance for users with long daily routines.

Visual experience is a priority, thanks to its expansive 11-inch LCD Eye-Care Display, which boasts a 16:10 aspect ratio and up to 500nits of brightness for clear visibility both indoors and outdoors. For users who frequently read or take notes, the matte variant delivers a paper-like texture through an anti-reflective coating, enhancing comfort during prolonged screen time.

OPPO has also introduced practical features to streamline cross-device productivity. Tools like Content Sync and App Relay enable real-time file transfers, app continuity, and drag-and-drop sharing, turning the Pad SE into a capable companion for multitasking professionals and students alike. With Google Gemini integration, the device offers AI-assisted planning, writing, and content generation, providing smart, context-aware support within users' everyday workflows.

Coming in Starlight White and Twilight Blue, the OPPO Pad SE's design complements its functional strengths with minimalist appeal. Its lightweight profile and seamless interface make it suitable for everything from video calls to journaling sessions to streaming marathons.

With the Pad SE, OPPO continues its mission to democratize access to smart technology—offering Filipinos a balanced tablet solution that delivers in both work and leisure. Positioned as #YourPadToSuccess, this release is more than a tech refresh—it's a statement on how devices can quietly empower ambition.





Samsung Galaxy A06 5G

Smartphone

PHP7,990

COMBINING EVERYDAY functionality with robust security and 5G speed, the Samsung Galaxy A06 5G is designed to serve users who demand efficiency without compromising data protection. Priced competitively, this device offers a feature set aligned with productivity, reliability, and mobility.

Powered by the MediaTek Dimensity 6300 chipset and paired with 4GB of RAM, the Galaxy A06 5G delivers smooth multitasking and responsive performance for everyday tasks, including messaging, browsing, content consumption, and light gaming. A 6.7-inch HD+ PLS LCD display delivers an immersive viewing experience with ample real estate for streaming, social media, or study applications.

Security is a key highlight of the Galaxy A06 5G. It is equipped with Samsung Knox Vault, the brand's hardware-based security system that safeguards sensitive data, including passwords, biometric information, and encryption keys. Additional protection is provided by Samsung Weaver, which intelligently

mitigates brute-force attempts with exponential back-off logic, enhancing authentication safeguards.

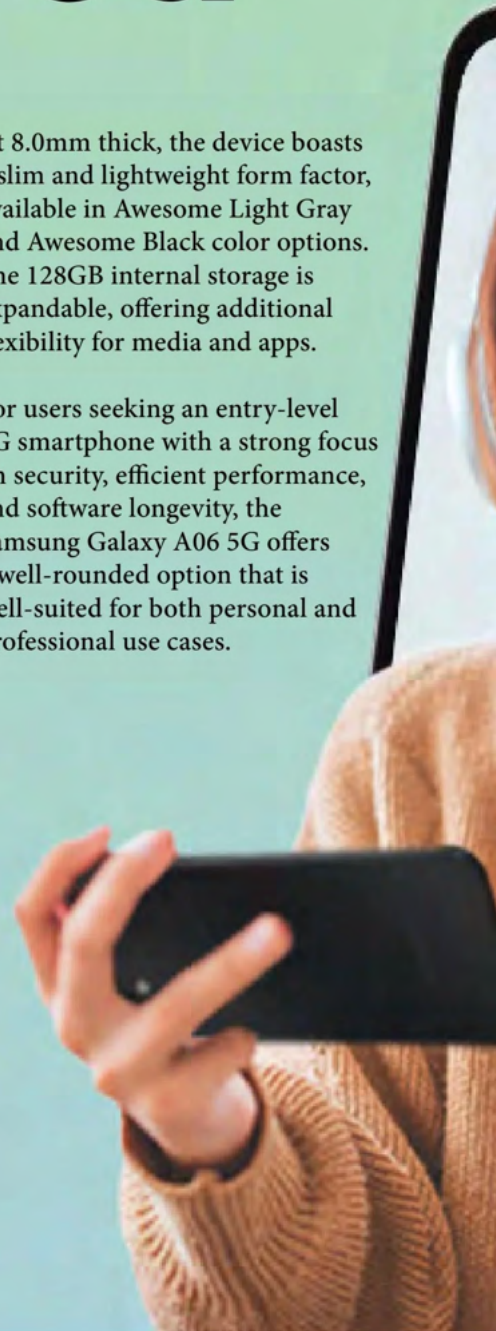
The device also includes a side-mounted fingerprint sensor for quick unlocking, and it is backed by four years of security updates and four generations of Android OS and One UI upgrades, ensuring long-term value and system integrity.

Battery life is another notable strength, featuring a 5,000mAh battery that supports 25W fast charging. This enables extended use and reduced downtime, making the device suitable for users constantly on the move. Its IP54 rating offers basic protection against dust and water splashes, enhancing durability in varied environments.

Designed for modern mobility, the Galaxy A06 5G also supports Smart Switch for secure data migration and Quick Share for seamless file transfers between devices. Running on One UI 7, the phone offers enhanced customization and accessibility, tailored for personalization across usage scenarios.

At 8.0mm thick, the device boasts a slim and lightweight form factor, available in Awesome Light Gray and Awesome Black color options. The 128GB internal storage is expandable, offering additional flexibility for media and apps.

For users seeking an entry-level 5G smartphone with a strong focus on security, efficient performance, and software longevity, the Samsung Galaxy A06 5G offers a well-rounded option that is well-suited for both personal and professional use cases.







Samsung Galaxy Tab S10 FE Series

Tablet

PHP26,990 – Tab S10 FE WiFi

PHP31,990 – Tab S10 FE 5G

PHP39,990 – Tab S10 FE+ 5G

SAMSUNG IS EXPANDING the fan-favorite Galaxy Tab lineup with the launch of the Galaxy Tab S10 FE and Galaxy Tab S10 FE+. Built to offer a premium tablet experience at a more accessible entry point, the FE series now features larger screens, intelligent tools, and enhanced performance designed for productivity and creativity on the go.

At the forefront of the refresh is the Galaxy Tab S10 FE+, which sports a massive 13.1-inch display—the largest in the FE lineup to date—framed by slimmer bezels for an immersive visual experience. Its 90Hz refresh rate ensures fluid visuals, while a peak brightness of up to 800 nits and Vision Booster technology optimize viewing even in outdoor settings. Blue-light reduction and Eye-Care features also help minimize eye strain, making the device well-suited for extended screen time.

Both the Tab S10 FE and FE+ boast upgrades in processing power and multitasking capabilities, with smooth transitions across apps and enhanced responsiveness for creative workflows. A new 13MP rear camera offers improved clarity for photo documentation, remote collaboration, and content capture. Despite these enhancements, the tablets are more than 4% lighter than their predecessors and retain IP68 water and dust resistance for greater portability and durability.

AI integration is a key highlight across the lineup. With Circle to Search powered by Google, users can identify, translate, or research anything on-screen without switching apps. Samsung Notes introduces features such as Handwriting Help and Solve Math, while the Galaxy AI Key on the Book Cover Keyboard provides instant access to AI assistants tailored to user preferences.

Creative users will also appreciate upgraded photo-editing tools such as Object Eraser and Best Face, which simplify retouching and group shot selection. Auto Trim intelligently compiles video highlights, and pre-loaded apps like LumaFusion, Clip Studio Paint, Goodnotes, and Noteself 3 transform the FE series into a versatile creation platform.

These tablets also sync seamlessly with other Galaxy devices. Users can monitor their smart home setup through the Home Insight dashboard and 3D Map View, extending the tablet's utility well beyond the personal workspace. All this is protected by Samsung Knox, offering multi-layer security from hardware-level defenses to real-time threat detection.

The tablets are available in Gray and Blue. By combining intelligent features, refined design, and seamless device integration, the Galaxy Tab S10 FE series proves that high-end functionality isn't just reserved for flagship models—it's now firmly within reach of fans.

Synology DiskStation DS925+

Network Attached Storage

THE DISKSTATION DS925+ is a powerful NAS solution designed for professionals and growing businesses seeking a compact yet robust data management system. Designed to meet the increasing demands for performance and reliability, the DS925+ provides a streamlined approach to handling high-volume workloads, ensuring business continuity in today's data-driven environments.

Compact yet efficient, the DS925+ is a 4-bay NAS system equipped with dual 2.5GbE ports and two M.2 NVMe SSD slots, allowing users to create all-flash storage pools or caching volumes for accelerated performance. Benchmarks show a significant leap from its predecessor, with 149% faster SMB download speeds, 150% faster upload speeds, 131% faster read speeds, and 150% faster write speeds. This makes the DS925+ a top choice for businesses seeking to enhance productivity and eliminate bottlenecks in data handling.

For those with growing data needs, the DS925+ offers scalable storage capabilities. When paired with the new Synology DX525 expansion unit, users can increase the number of drive bays from 4 to 9, achieving a raw capacity of up to 180TB. This makes it

an ideal solution for small offices, edge server deployments, and distributed teams that require flexible storage expansion without compromising space efficiency.

The DS925+ runs on Synology's DiskStation Manager (DSM), a powerful operating system that brings enterprise-grade features to users of all sizes. With Synology Drive, users can set up a private cloud for seamless cross-platform file access and synchronization between multiple sites. The Active Backup Suite provides comprehensive protection across Windows, macOS, Linux systems, virtual machines, and cloud services, complete with off-site backup options for added data resilience. Surveillance Station, another key feature, offers advanced video monitoring capabilities and real-time analytics to strengthen physical security infrastructure.

Built with reliability at its core, the DS925+ undergoes over 7,000 hours of compatibility testing to ensure seamless performance with Synology hard drives. The system requires compatible drives to optimize operation and maintain long-term dependability, particularly in mission-critical deployments.



TechLife Pad Plus 12"

Tablet

PHP9,999

TECHLIFE has introduced its latest entry into the tablet space—the TechLife Pad Plus 12", a device aimed squarely at users who want entertainment, productivity, and portability in a single package. With a bold 12-inch 2K display, robust specs, and smart design choices, the Pad Plus 12" positions itself as a compelling choice for students, professionals, and casual users.

The device features a 12-inch Full HD+ display with a crisp resolution of 1200 x 2000 pixels. It supports YouTube video playback up to 2160p and delivers up to 450 nits of brightness, making it readable indoors and under daylight conditions. The 180Hz touch sampling rate ensures responsive interaction—ideal for casual gaming, browsing, and content creation. Offered in stylish colors like Storm Grey, Sky Blue, and Moonlight Silver, the Pad Plus 12" blends performance with modern aesthetics.

For users juggling apps and media, the Pad Plus 12" offers 8GB of physical RAM plus an additional 8GB of dynamic RAM expansion, ensuring smooth transitions and minimal lag. Backed by 256GB of internal storage, the device can accommodate a large library

of files, estimated at around 59,000 songs or photos. Need more room? The tablet supports up to 2TB of OTG storage, making it ideal for students, professionals, and creatives who manage extensive media files or work across devices.

A standout feature is the tablet's 8,000mAh battery, which offers up to 30 hours of call time, 12.7 hours of music playback, or 3 hours of video playback at full settings. The device also supports 18W fast charging and reverse charging, allowing it to function as a power bank for smaller devices—an added touch of utility that enhances its value. Despite its large display and high battery capacity, the Pad Plus 12" maintains a slim 7.6mm profile and lightweight build, reinforcing its portability credentials.

Whether used for studying, streaming, Zoom meetings, or casual gaming, the TechLife Pad Plus 12" delivers excellent specs for its category. In a market crowded with low-cost tablets that often compromise on performance or design, this new release hits a rare sweet spot: big-screen entertainment, reliable battery life, and practical productivity tools—at an entry-level price.





REVIEWED AND PHOTOS BY CHRIS NOEL HIDALGO

VIVO V50 LITE 5G

SMARTPHONE



The vivo V50 Lite is touted as the brand's slimmest phone with the largest battery capacity to date—all the while being tagged at a competitive price point. But is it more than its look, its battery, and its price? Let's find out.

DESIGN



The vivo V50 Lite comes to the Philippines in three colorways: Phantom Black, Titanium Gold, and Fantasy Purple. We got a sample of that last palette, and as with most non-black vivo color schemes—particularly in the brand's V segment—it is quite flamboyant. It combines purple and pink hues, along with feather-like swatches that dance when hit by light.

The oblong-shaped camera island juts out and sits on the upper left of the back housing and contains three imaging modules. The topmost and the largest is the 50MP main shooter. Below it is the 8MP ultra-wide lens. The bottommost is vivo's signature Aura Light system, which provides more balanced white fill-light in low-light situations versus a conventional flash module. The vivo branding mark is present on the bottom left.

The phone has a high-gloss frame with a metallic finish. Along the right edge are the power and volume buttons; the bottom edge has the primary speaker grille, the USB-C port, a microphone pinhole, and the dual nano-SIM tray; the left edge is bare; and the top edge has another microphone pinhole and a secondary speaker grille.

The front has the sizeable 6.77-inch FHD+ AMOLED display which occupies a class-topping 94.2% of the forward real estate. A top-aligned punch hole houses the 32MP selfie camera.

While the layout is standard fare, the V50 Lite's palette makes it visually standout from a lineup of its peers.

HARDWARE



Running the vivo V50 Lite is an octa-core MediaTek Dimensity 6300 processor with two high-performance Cortex-A76 cores ticking at 2.4GHz and six power-efficient Cortex-A55 cores humming at 2.0GHz. This 6nm chip is paired in our review unit with 8GB of RAM and 256GB of non-expandable storage, but it is also available



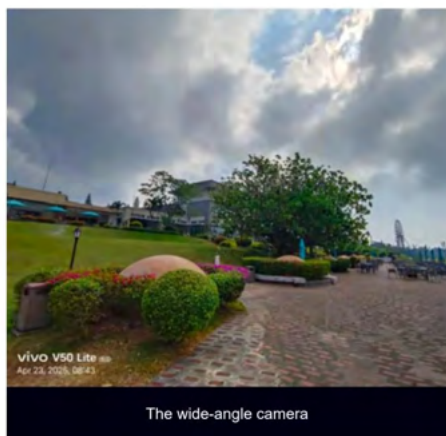
in a 12GB RAM and 512GB ROM variant. While the processor is two years old as of writing, it strikes a good balance between affordability and performance that won't leave users wanting.

The aforementioned 6.77-inch AMOLED display has a 2392 x 1080px resolution resulting in a pixel density of 387ppi. It peaks at a bright 1800 nits with SGS Low Blue Light Certification to ensure your eyes won't be as easily fried during long-use sessions. The refresh rate maxes out at 120Hz for fluid visuals—as long as the processor is able to fully drive it.

The vivo V50 Lite's camera setup is headlined by a 1/1.95-inch-large 50MP Sony IMX882 sensor with an f/1.8 aperture, complemented by an 8MP f/2.2 ultra-wide camera with a 120° field of view. Meanwhile, a 32MP f/2.5 front camera handles selfie duties.

Beyond these key spec lines, the vivo V50 Lite also boasts a robust build and a robust battery. It is IP65 dust and water resistant and has SGS Five-Star Drop Resistance Certification, ensuring protection against accidental spills and falls. Meanwhile, its battery is rated at a humongous 6500mAh BlueVolt with a measured 5-year battery health at up to 1,700 charging cycles. It charges with a bundled 90W vivo FlashCharge power brick and USB-C cable which claims a 50% charge rate for just 20-minutes, and a full charge in just 59 minutes. In case you need it to, the vivo V50 Lite doubles as a powerbank and is capable of reverse charging your other devices.

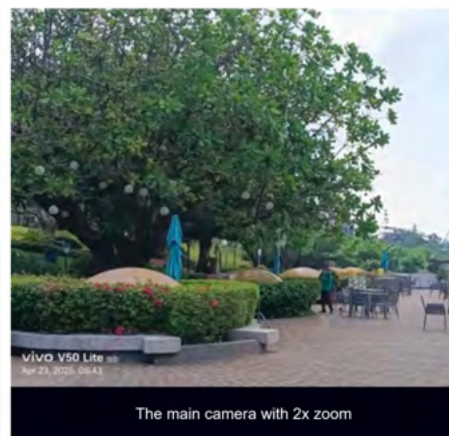
All that tech is crammed into a 7.79mm thin and 196g body, making it one of the sveltest phones around despite its sizable power pack.



The wide-angle camera



The main camera with 1x zoom



The main camera with 2x zoom

USER EXPERIENCE



The selling point of the vivo V50 Lite—besides its affordable price tag—is its battery, so let's start with that. In the PCMark Work 3.0 Battery Life test which took the phone from 100% to 20% battery life at maximum volume and at 50% brightness, the vivo V50 Lite chugged for an astounding 22 hours and 14 minutes. This is the longest battery life out of any phone I have tested! Charging the phone from completely dead to full with the bundled 90W vivo FlashCharge power brick and cable, the V50 Lite took in 24% of power in 15 minutes, 46% in half an hour, and 100% in just over an hour. The charging speed may not exactly be as advertised, but it is still blazing fast considering the V50 Lite's sizeable fuel tank.

In contrast, the synthetic benchmark performance of the vivo V50 Lite was a bit tamer than its battery performance, though still respectable. It scored 9116 in PCMark Work 3.0 Performance; 1356 in 3DMark Wild Life; 736 in Geekbench 6 CPU Single-Core; 1897 in Geekbench 6 CPU Multi-Core; and 1454 in Geekbench 6 GPU OpenCL. For storage speeds, it scored 242.95 MB/s and 395.40 MB/s in the Cross Platform Disk Test Sequential Write and Read tests, respectively.

For gaming, the vivo V50 Lite is able to run even more graphically-intensive games, some even at maximum settings. Of course, consistently smooth performance will necessitate tuning

down some eye candy. For example, *Genshin Impact*, *Wuthering Waves*, *Diablo Immortal*, *NBA 2K Mobile*, and *XCOM 2 Collection* will all run and are all playable even with everything cranked up. However, visually-busy scenes make the frames stutter. Dropping down to medium graphics presets solves this problem. Competitive titles such as *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* and *Call of Duty Mobile* run without any hiccups.

You also get decent shooters with the vivo V50 Lite. Photos from the main and selfie cameras are pretty good, with decent dynamic range. Shots from the ultra-wide camera are expectedly darker, though the automatic post-processing takes care of the underexposed areas.

The Aura Light also does a great job of providing well-lit, more flatteringly-exposed shots.

For even better shots, the vivo V50 Lite comes with AI Erase 2.0 to remove unwanted stray elements from photos.

VALUE



Priced for as low as PHP 13,999, the vivo V50 Lite is a definite steal. It may not be the most powerful phone out there but you get more than what you pay for. It can still run daily tasks smoothly and even demanding games at more than playable frame rates. The cameras are also quite decent and are backed by vivo's signature Aura Light module. Add a battery that won't quit, and you have a smartphone



that is more than worthy of being your daily driver.

BOTTOMLINE

If you're looking for a phone that can go on and on and on at a price that won't break the bank, then look no further than the vivo V50 Lite.

Shots from the vivo V50 Lite 5G showing its low light performance.



The shot on the left without the Aura Light versus the shot on the right with the Aura Light. The Aura Light is able to offset the unnatural red ambient hue and provide a more natural skin tone.



The AI Erase feature does wonders with removing unwanted photo elements.



SPECIFICATIONS

Display: 6.77-inch, 2392 x 1080px, FHD+ AMOLED with 387 ppi; 120Hz refresh rate; 1,800 nits peak brightness; DCI-P3 wide color gamut; SGS Low Blue Light Certification; 94.2% screen-to-body ratio

Processor: MediaTek Dimensity 6300

OS: Funtouch OS 15 (Android 15)

RAM: 8GB RAM

Storage: 256GB

Camera: 50MP f/1.8 Sony IMX882 (main rear); 8MP f/2.2 ultra-wide (secondary rear); 32MP f/2.5 (front)

Connectivity: 5G, 4G LTE, Wi-Fi 5, Bluetooth 5.4, GPS, OTG, USB 2.0 Type-C, dual nano-SIM

Battery: 6,500mAh BlueVolt, 90W vivo FlashCharge, 5-year battery health

Others: In-display Optical Fingerprint Scanner; Face Unlock; reverse charging; SGS 5-Star Drop Resistance; MIL-STD 810H Military-Grade Certification; IP65 dust and water resistance; Aura Light; AI Erase 2.0

Dimensions: 163.77 x 76.28 x 7.79 mm

Weight: 197g

Colors: Phantom Black, Titanium Gold, Fantasy Purple

Pricing:

- 8+256 (4G) PHP 13,999
- 8+256 (5G) PHP 16,999
- 12+512 (5G) PHP 19,999

WHAT'S HOT

- ▶ Long battery life
- ▶ Fully charges in around an hour
- ▶ Solid overall performance
- ▶ Competitive price tag

WHAT'S NOT

- ▶ Slow storage read and write speeds

REVIEWED BY GABRIEL PE

ASUS EXPERTBOOK P5 (P5405)

LAPTOP



ASUS has always had a diverse portfolio for its laptop lineup. There's the now iconic Republic of Gamers (ROG) gaming line, the hip and stylish Vivobook series, the sleek Zenbook series, and for those looking for a more mature and secure device, the Expertbook series. The ASUS Expertbook series is geared more towards enterprise and business-centric users. The Expertbook P5 (P5405) is a laptop from the Expertbook lineup designed to elevate your productivity with its powerful processor and AI integration.



DESIGN



The ASUS Expertbook P5 is a sleek laptop. According to ASUS, the Expertbook P5 is their first laptop made with a silver aluminum body, making it lightweight yet durable enough for the mobile businessman. At only 1.2kg and 16.5mm thick, this laptop is remarkably lightweight and thin.

The Expertbook P5 carries with it a minimalist design. You'll only find the ASUS Expertbook label on the cover and nothing more.

The whole laptop was designed with ergonomics in mind. The display is a 14-inch IPS display with a 2.5K resolution and up to 144Hz refresh rate. It has a very

high PWM, meaning there's less flickering. The IPS display also has 100% sRGB color gamut and 400nits of max brightness. I would have preferred an OLED display, but the screen is good enough for most everyday tasks.

Opening the laptop, you're greeted with a large keyboard layout. The keyboard is non-mechanical but nevertheless has a typing feel. Key distance is also good, I easily reached my usual WPM in a matter of minutes. Beneath the keyboard is a fairly large ErgoSense touchpad that does feel good to the touch. It even comes with smart gesture control for easier navigation.

As ergonomics is a priority in the design, ASUS placed most of the I/O ports on the left side of the device. You can find two

USB-C ports with Thunderbolt support (one doubles as the charging port), a full-sized HDMI 2.1 Port, a USB-A 3.2 port, and the mic/audio 3.5mm port. On the right side is a USB-A 3.2 port and a Kensington Nano security lock.

HARDWARE



Powering the ASUS Expertbook P5 (5405) is an Intel Core Ultra 7 258V processor, a 200-series (Lunar Lake) Intel Ultra processor. The Intel Core Ultra 7 is an octa-core processor with 4 performance and four efficiency cores. In a real-world scenario, it is powerful and super power-efficient. The Intel Core Ultra includes an NPU that goes up to 47 TOPS AI-accelerated tasks.



Paired with the Intel Core Ultra 7 processor is an Intel Arc 140V integrated graphics. The graphic is surprisingly powerful enough to allow some light gaming, and even some ray tracing. In my test, I tried running *DOTA 2* at medium settings and was able to get around 40 to 50FPS. It also managed to run *Cyberpunk 2077*, but only at low settings, with the internal benchmark pegging it to 19.28FPS.

I ran Geekbench 6, Cinebench R23, 3DMark, and PCMark 10. Geekbench had it at 2741pts for single-core, and 11150pts for multi-core. Cinebench R23 had it at 1932pts for single-core, and 10485pts for multi-core. 3DMark Steel Nomad Light had the GPU at 3206pts while Time Spy had it at 4395pts. Finally, PCMark 10 had an overall score of 6561pts with Essential scoring 9202pts, Productivity 8869pts, and Digital Content Creation at 9391pts.

Other specs of the ASUS Expertbook P5 (P5405) include up to 32GB of LPDDR5X RAM and 1TB of PCIe 4.0 SSD storage. As for the battery, it has a 63Whr battery, which ASUS claims to last for 28 hrs. In testing, the laptop was able to last me two days of work, consisting mostly of internet browsing, documents, and some video streaming.

One of the highlights of every ASUS laptop is its military-grade testing. I'm happy to report that the ASUS Expertbook P5 has an even more rigorous testing regimen than the consumer laptop lineups. You can feel from the materials that ASUS really paid attention to the build quality of the laptop.

Finally, what sets the Expertbook series apart from the regular consumer laptop is the suite of security features. Inside the Expertbook P5 is ASUS ExpertGuardian, a combination of BIOS security, TPM 2.0, secure biometrics log-in features like an IR face unlock, and a FIDO2-certified Fingerprint sensor. The fingerprint sensor also utilizes a match-on-chip system, saving the fingerprint data locally for more security.





USER EXPERIENCE



What surprised me the most with the ASUS Expertbook P5 is its efficiency. The Intel Core Ultra 7 does a great job of ensuring the laptop can last more than a day, yet deliver consistent performance when needed. The last time I was this impressed with battery performance was with the Snapdragon X laptops, but those had the disadvantage of app compatibility. If you need a charge, the Expertbook P5 uses USB-C, so you can use your phone's fast charger instead of bringing another charger.

Another surprise was the way it handled thermals. During my time with the laptop, it stayed cool most of the time. The only time it got warm was when I was doing benchmarks, but even then, it never got to the point of worryingly hot to the touch.

Even though the ASUS Expertbook P5 is a work-centric laptop, it can still go toe-to-toe with other consumer devices in gaming and media streaming. It can run esports titles easily, so you can game, albeit not on the highest settings, and the display, while not OLED, is still good enough for binge-watching movies. The speakers are also superb, coming in loud with minimal distortions at high volume.

As a work-centric laptop, the ASUS Expertbook P5 stands out with its AI integration. First, it's a Copilot+AI PC with an integrated NPU for AI acceleration in certain tasks. Aside from the Copilot+AI, ASUS has included some useful features with its ASUS AI ExpertMeet apps. These include an AI Meeting Minute AI-based meeting transcriber/ notetaker, AI Translated subtitle, AI Noise Cancellation,

AI Camera, and various professional watermark makers for meetings.

I found that the AI Meeting Minute, while not 100% accurate, is still helpful for keeping track of what happened in long meetings. It can distinguish between speakers for easy note-taking. It cannot distinguish languages (code-switching), especially in lengthy speeches, but you can easily go back to the recording to double-check what was said. The AI Noise Cancellation is another feature that I found to be useful. The noise reduction is alright for taking meetings in busy cafes, and with the AI translate subtitle, you can also read what you might have misheard.

If there is one thing I wish were better, it is the display. For its price, I think that an OLED panel would have been a better choice. OLED colors are still tough to beat, and for the cost of the device, would have been warranted or at least offered as an optional upgrade. That said, most can make do with its IPS display, and even then, it is still more than enough for most tasks you might want to do with this laptop.

VALUE



The ASUS Expertbook P5 (P5405) starts at PHP82,995. Compared to some of the regular consumer devices, it's on the more expensive side. But at that price, it does include Windows 11 Pro software, ASUS' business support, the suite of security features, 55 years of guaranteed ASUS security updates, including BIOS and drivers, and superb performance. Given all that, I think the ASUS Expertbook P5 (P5405) is worth considering.

BOTTOMLINE

A worthy partner for those who want efficiency with security and performance while on the go.

SPECIFICATIONS

Processors: Up to Intel Core Ultra 7 258V

Graphics: Intel Graphics Arc

Display: 14.0-inch 2560 x 1600, 144Hz, Hybrid-DC dimming, Anti-Glare, 100% sRGB, 400nits

Memory: up to 32GB LPDDR5X

Storage: 1 x M.2 2230 SSD, up to 1TB PCIe 4.0 SSD

OS: Windows 11 Professional

Battery: 63Whr Polymer.

Connectivity: up to Wi-Fi 7 and Bluetooth 5.4 Wireless Card

I/O Ports: 2 x Thunderbolt 4, USB3.2 Gen2, support wide range 5V~20V 1 x USB-A 3.2 Gen2, support BC1.2 1 x USB-A 3.2 Gen2 1 x HDMI 2.1 1 x Audio combo jack 1 x Kensington nano lock

Other features: 1080p FHD IR Windows Hello camera, Webcam Shield for privacy; Windows Hello Match-on-Chip fingerprint reader integrated with power key

Dimensions: 31.2 x 22.3 x 1.49 cm

Weight: Starting from 1.29kg

WHAT'S HOT

- ▶ Amazing battery life
- ▶ Good speakers
- ▶ AI integration is well thought out
- ▶ ASUS' suite of security features.

WHAT'S NOT

- ▶ Display is not OLED

WORDS BY **MARIBELLE ALBA**

NISSAN TERRA SPORT 4X4 AT

A SECOND LOOK

The midsize SUV category is one of the most competitive in the Philippine market, and for good reason. Filipinos want vehicles that are tough enough for provincial roads, comfortable for long trips, and practical enough to haul the whole family—and their gear. The Nissan Terra Sport 4x4 AT, despite not being a new model, still makes a strong case for all three.

We took it on a full-on road trip from Metro Manila to Pangasinan and back—over 500 kilometers of mixed roads, passengers, and cargo. Here's how the Terra Sport held its ground, not just as a capable SUV, but as one that's built to go the distance.



DESIGN



The “Sport” in the Terra Sport isn’t just branding—it actually delivers a fresh take on an otherwise rugged platform. Gone is the chrome, replaced by gloss black accents on the grille, door handles, mirrors, step boards, and roof rails. Even the 18-inch wheels are finished in black, giving it a cleaner, more modern look that stands apart from the usual midsize SUV crowd.

There’s a strong, no-nonsense stance to the Terra—wide, upright, and purposeful. The V-motion grille and quad-LED headlamps still look sharp, while the rear LED lighting and subtle badging give it a clean finish. The proportions are solid and balanced—no awkward overhangs or forced styling flourishes.

The result is a design that feels current without chasing trends. It’s

understated, but with enough edge to turn heads at a stoplight or seaside resort.

EQUIPMENT



Step inside and the Terra Sport 4x4 AT makes it clear you’re not riding in a base model. The 9-inch infotainment touchscreen supports wireless Apple CarPlay and wired Android Auto, and the 8-speaker Bose sound system holds its own even at highway speeds. It’s an ideal setup for road trips—easy connectivity, decent sound quality, and minimal distraction.

Up front, the dual-zone climate control system keeps the cabin cool, with rear vents that reach all the way to the third row. Even in the mid-afternoon heat of Pangasinan, the entire cabin remained comfortable. USB charging ports are available in both rows, which kept

everyone’s devices alive during long stretches.

Safety is covered with blind spot monitoring, rear cross-traffic alert, forward emergency braking, and lane departure warning. The 360-degree Around View Monitor was particularly useful on tight provincial roads and parking spots, helping reduce the stress of navigating a full-size SUV in tight quarters.

Other thoughtful touches include auto-folding side mirrors, push-start ignition, and intelligent key access. There’s nothing gimmicky here—just features that make real-life driving easier.





USER EXPERIENCE



This is where the Terra Sport quietly proves its worth. Under the hood is a 2.5-liter turbo diesel engine with 190-horsepower and 450Nm of torque, paired with a 7-speed automatic transmission. The output isn't earth-shaking, but it's smooth, confident, and perfectly tuned for long drives and full loads. Whether overtaking buses on the expressway or crawling through sleepy town traffic, the Terra responded predictably and without hesitation.

That said, the Terra rides very much like what it is—a ladder-frame SUV. The suspension leans toward the firm side, and on uneven provincial

roads or patchy stretches, it can get a bit bouncy, especially when the cabin isn't fully loaded. It's not uncomfortable, but you do feel more of the road than in more car-like crossovers. At highway speeds, however, it settles nicely and remains stable even with wind or passing trucks.

Steering is light and easy, which helps in tight city situations, but it's not overly loose—there's enough feedback to keep things composed on open roads. Brake feel is progressive and confidence-inspiring.

Interior noise levels are impressively low, with good insulation from both engine clatter and outside sounds.

Nissan clearly put effort into NVH (noise, vibration, and harshness) control, which helps offset some of the ride's truck-like tendencies.

But what really stands out is the space. This is a true seven-seater. The second row slides and reclines, and the third row is genuinely usable—not just for kids, but even for adults on short hauls. Everyone gets decent legroom and their own vents, which is a major win in Philippine family haulers.

Cargo space is another highlight. With the third row folded flat, the rear transforms into a cavernous cargo area that handled bags, coolers, and local goods without a problem.



VALUE



The Nissan Terra Sport 4x4 AT currently retails at about PHP2.4 million. That's competitive when stacked against top-tier rivals. But what makes it more compelling is how much SUV you're getting for the money.

You get full 4x4 capability, premium appointments, dependable diesel power, and tech that's actually useful—not just showroom candy. More importantly, the Terra Sport holds up. After real-world use, it still feels solid, quiet, and well put together. The leather, buttons, screens, and driving dynamics all continue to perform like new.

And because it's a Nissan, maintenance should be straightforward through a service network that is well-established throughout the country—another key point for those who travel far and often.



BOTTOM LINE

Two years since its launch, the Nissan Terra Sport 4x4 AT may not grab headlines, but it doesn't have to. What it offers is a strong, confident SUV experience that prioritizes the things that matter most: comfort, utility, space, and long-term durability.





NEW MAZDA BT-50

Mazda Philippines launches the new 2025 BT-50, a pickup truck that goes beyond the specs, to deliver performance and technology that enables you to live your life's passion, whatever it may be. Significantly enhanced both inside and out, it is ready for adventure, big or small, routine or extraordinary.



Expressive Mazda Design

The BT-50 features a bolder exterior design that builds on Mazda's signature KODO – Soul of Motion design. It is most impactful from the front where the new Black Metallic Signature Wing grille and hexagonal inserts reflect the Mazda DNA, while exuding a sense of resolute capability. It is framed by new standard LED headlights with adjustable leveling control for optimal visibility even at full loads.

The front bumper has been resculpted with the daytime running lights moving from the fog lamp cluster to the headlamps. In its place are new integrated air vents which, together

with the new air curtain underneath the front bumper, improve its aerodynamics for enhanced real-world fuel efficiency. A front skid plate further enhances its character.

At the rear, the BT-50's expressive appearance has been heightened with a distinctive ridged design along the bottom edge of the tailgate. A new Tailgate Assist function reduces the effort needed to open or close the tailgate, making it convenient to load items. New LED taillamps with Emergency Stop Signal function and a larger Mazda logo complete the look.

Other changes include body-colored sideview mirrors and exclusive alloy wheel designs.

Adding to the BT-50's powerful stance, the BT-50 4x4 Pangolin exclusively sports a Brilliant Black Fashion Bar with Pangolin badges, roof rails, two-tone fender flares, a revolver cargo bed cover, and 18-inch Diamond Cut alloy wheels with All-Terrain tires.

Enhanced Capability & Reliability

Extensively tested in a variety of road conditions, the BT-50 delivers tried-and-tested capability and dependability.

The BT-50 is powered by a 3.0-liter DOHC turbo diesel engine delivering 190PS at 3,600rpm and 450Nm of torque from 1,600 to 2,600rpm. Pairing a 6-speed automatic with Manual Mode,



it delivers usable performance with superb fuel economy in a wide range of driving scenarios. Standard Hill Launch Assist prevents the vehicle from rolling backward when accelerating from a stop on an incline by briefly applying the brakes when the driver transitions from the brake pedal to the accelerator pedal.

The BT-50's frame is composed of high-tensile steel, making it strong and more rigid, while keeping it lightweight. It allows for a 1-ton payload capacity and a towing capacity of up to 3,500 kilograms. The high-riding suspension provides up to 240mm of ground clearance, supplemented by 800mm of water wading capability, resulting in



a BT-50 that can traverse any obstacle with peace of mind.

Exclusive to the BT-50 4x4 Pangolin is a new Rough Terrain Mode. Working in tandem with the Shift-on-the-Fly 4x4 system and Electronic Rear Differential Lock, it modulates throttle and brake inputs, preventing wheelspin by instantly sending power to the wheels with the most grip, thereby ensuring exceptional traction on the most challenging surfaces. Hill Descent Control automatically maintains a steady speed when driving downhill, allowing the driver to focus solely on steering, thereby enhancing safety and reducing fatigue.



Value-for-Money Equipment

The changes to the BT-50 are just as comprehensive inside the cabin. It is thoughtfully equipped with an abundance of standard features and accessories that make it ready for life straight from the showroom floor.

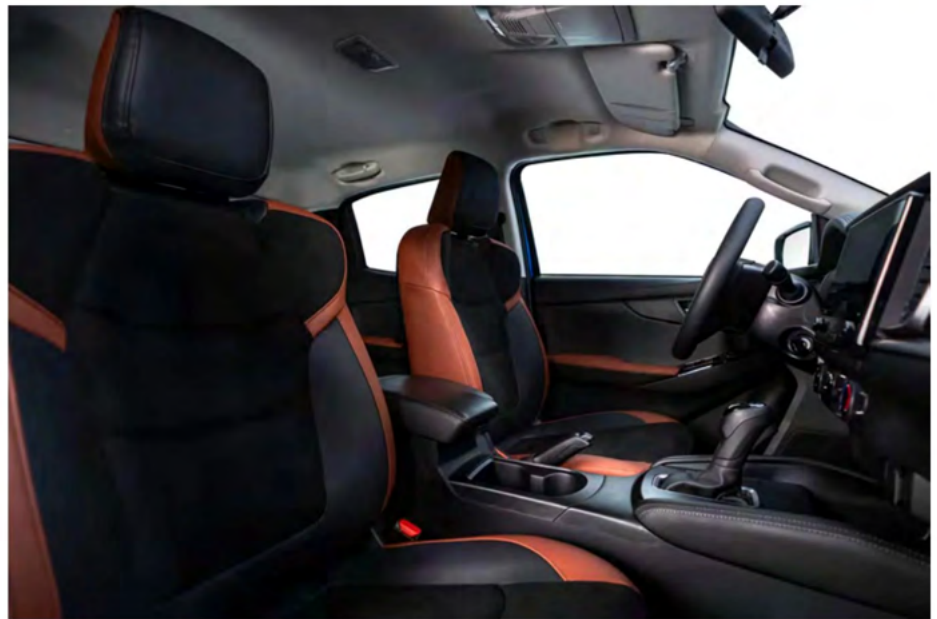
A new Human Machine Interface (HMI), measuring up to 9 inches, improves the overall ergonomics and functionality. This center infotainment screen is presented with a more responsive touchscreen. The updated interface includes a built-in clinometer that displays the pitch and roll of the BT-50 in real-time. It also serves as the display not just to the standard wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, but to the new 360-degree camera with built-in digital video recording that functions as an onboard dash camera to provide an extra layer of security while driving. A row of capacitive touch buttons and physical knobs for the volume and tuning make it more intuitive than ever, while USB Type C ports enable compatibility with the latest smartphones. On the BT-50 4x4 Pangolin, the ADAS functions are also now accessible through the infotainment screen.

Another visual highlight is the sophisticated interior color scheme. The BT-40 4x2 showcases Black and Terracotta Leather Seats with Leganu Suede inserts, exclusively designed for the Philippine market. This is complemented by a black leather steering wheel and a front center armrest with terracotta stitching, as well as terracotta door armrests. The BT-50 4x4 Pangolin, meanwhile, features all-black leather seats with perforated detailing and 8-way power adjustment for the driver.

All-weather floor mats are now standard on the BT-50. Made of tough and durable Thermoplastic Polyolefins (TPO) material, these deep dish, anti-slip floor mats are easy to clean and protect the floor from all liquids, dirt, and foul odors.

Exclusive to the BT-50 4x4 Pangolin are features such as a new 7-inch LCD meter cluster that clearly presents user-customizable information to the driver, a 15-watt wireless charger, an 8-speaker sound system that includes a pair of roof-mounted speakers, dual-zone climate control with rear vents, and Smart Keyless Entry with Remote Engine Start and Walk Away Auto Door Locks.





Finally, the suite of advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) on the BT-50 4x4 Pangolin has been comprehensively updated, starting with new front stereo cameras with double the field of view. This further optimizes features such as the Adaptive Cruise Control, Front Autonomous Emergency Braking, and Lane Departure Warning. New for 2025 are functions such as Pedal Misapplication Mitigation, Rear Autonomous Emergency Braking, Rear Cross Traffic Brake, Multi-Collision Brake, and Driver Attention Assist.

Worry-Free Ownership

BT-50 owners are free to pursue their passions without worrying about maintenance costs or needing assistance.

It offers Mazda's industry-leading 5-year Free Service Plan, which incorporates lubricants, parts, and labor replacements recommended by Mazda Japan for a period of five years. This shields owners from budgeting and cost inflation concerns during the first five years of ownership, allowing them to allocate these savings to their passions in life.

In addition, the BT-50 includes complimentary 3-year 24/7 Emergency Roadside Assistance, giving owners



peace of mind knowing that roadside help is always just a call away in the event of an untoward situation.

Variants, Colors, and Pricing

The new Mazda BT-50 is offered in six exterior colors, all of which are available on both variants. Three all-new colors—Red Earth Metallic, Sailing Blue Metallic, and Geode White Pearl—are introduced for 2025, while three colors—Ingot Silver Metallic, Concrete Gray Mica, and True Black Mica—are carried over from the current BT-50.

Perfectly embodying the spirit of life and adventure, the Mazda BT-50, with its bold design and enhanced capability, comes in two variants: the BT-50 4.0 4x2, priced at PHP1,550,000, and the BT-50 4x4 Pangolin, priced at PHP1,850,000.

MERCEDES-BENZ PLUG-IN HYBRIDS

With the launch of the E 350e and GLC 350e, Mercedes-Benz brings intelligent electrification and modern luxury to Filipino roads.



Mercedes-Benz Philippines is steering luxury into a cleaner future with the official launch of two new plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs): the all-new E-Class E 350e executive sedan and the versatile GLC 350e SUV. These models mark a significant chapter in the brand's journey toward sustainable mobility, where high-performance engineering meets intelligent electrification, now available for the discerning Filipino market.



The Rise of Plug-In Hybrid Luxury

As urban dwellers search for environmentally conscious yet practical alternatives to conventional vehicles, PHEVs are emerging as a preferred choice. These dual-powered vehicles offer the best of both worlds, allowing drivers to cover daily commutes purely on electric power while benefiting from internal combustion engines for longer journeys. More than just fuel savings, these hybrids qualify for coding exemptions and bring long-term advantages in a city like Metro Manila.

With the debut of the E 350e and GLC 350e, Mercedes-Benz cements its role in making the luxury segment more sustainable, blending iconic craftsmanship with next-generation powertrains.

E 350e Plug-in Hybrid: Elegance Meets Efficiency

The E-Class Plug-in Hybrid returns with a fresh silhouette and refined interior, now equipped with plug-in hybrid intelligence. Upholding its reputation for executive excellence, the E 350e combines timeless styling—from the classic Mercedes-Benz star on the bonnet to its sculpted bodywork—with modern electric performance.

Inside, the highlight is the MBUX Superscreen—a stunning digital dashboard with a 14.4-inch central touchscreen and a 12.3-inch front passenger display housed under a single glass surface. This interface merges safety, personalization, and sleek aesthetics into one futuristic design.



The audio experience is equally elevated with a Burmester 4D surround sound system, featuring 17 speakers and Dolby Atmos® support. Enhancing the tactile luxury are top-tier materials, ambient lighting, and intelligent driver assistance systems, all designed to elevate every journey.

Charging is convenient and efficient, with onboard 11kW AC charging support and compatibility with Type 2 sockets. The E 350e makes electrification seamless for both city living and long-distance travel.

Retail Price: PHP 5,490,000







GLC 350e Plug-in Hybrid: The Electrified SUV for Modern Living

Merging versatility with elegance, the GLC 350e brings electrified performance to one of Mercedes-Benz's most popular SUVs. Its exterior fuses sporty contours with refined detailing, while the spacious cabin offers up to 1,530 liters of cargo space—setting a new benchmark in its segment.

Tech-savvy drivers will appreciate the latest MBUX system, featuring Navigation Plus, Apple CarPlay, and multiple USB ports, including those in the rear seat. Meanwhile, an all-electric range of over 100km and a turbocharged hybrid engine with 204hp ensures that sustainability doesn't come at the cost of capability.

The Transparent Bonnet feature offers a virtual top-down view beneath the front of the SUV, ideal for navigating tight urban spaces or rough terrain. Meanwhile, 4MATIC all-wheel drive and Off-Road driving modes enhance confidence on any surface.

Available in Polar White, Verde Silver, and Graphite Grey, the GLC 350e is designed for those who demand both function and finesse.

Retail Price: PHP 4,890,000



Redefining Luxury for a Sustainable Generation

With the introduction of these plug-in hybrids, Mercedes-Benz brings its global sustainability strategy to the Philippine market, offering vehicles that are both luxurious and future-ready. These models are not just a step toward electrification—they represent a transformation in how performance, technology, and environmental responsibility can coexist in the modern automotive landscape.

As the Philippine auto industry slowly embraces greener alternatives, Mercedes-Benz delivers a timely and elegant response: clean energy, wrapped in luxury.



FORD INTRODUCES SPECIAL EDITION RANGER AND EVEREST VARIANTS

Ford Philippines is making waves in the local automotive scene with the simultaneous launch of two exciting new offerings: the New Ford Ranger Sport Special Edition and the New Ford Everest Sport Special Edition. These new variants build on the popularity of their respective base models by adding bold design touches, enhanced functionality, and smart technology—perfectly timed for those looking to elevate their adventures in 2025 and beyond.



Tougher and More Functional: Ford Ranger Sport Special Edition

Built on the widely loved Ranger Sport platform, the new Ranger Sport Special Edition amplifies the toughness and utility the nameplate is known for. It boasts functional enhancements including a long leg sports bar that not only reinforces its rugged aesthetic but also provides structural support for hauling heavy or uneven cargo. The cabin is further enhanced with retractable cup holders integrated into the instrument panel—an oft-requested feature from Ford fans.

Under the hood, the Ranger Sport Special Edition packs a 2.0L Single Turbo Diesel engine paired with a six-speed automatic transmission that delivers 170PS and 405Nm of torque. With both 4x2 and 4x4 drivetrain options, it's built to conquer a variety of terrains with confidence.

Complementing its powerful performance are 18-inch alloy wheels, front ventilated disc brakes, and a rear drum brake system, supported by a

double wishbone front suspension and leaf spring rear suspension setup for a smooth and controlled ride.

Inside, it's all about comfort and connectivity. The 8-inch digital instrument cluster and 10-inch touchscreen infotainment system with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto integration keep drivers informed and entertained on the go.

Priced from PHP1,529,000, the Ranger Sport Special Edition is available in Absolute Black, Arctic White, Blue Lightning, and Meteor Grey. It also comes with FordPass remote connectivity and a 5-year warranty.

Sleek Sophistication with an Edge: Ford Everest Sport Special Edition

Meanwhile, the Everest Sport Special Edition brings a sportier, more refined presence to the mid-SUV segment. Taking cues from the base Everest Sport, this new variant features a series of blacked-out upgrades—including a black roof and spoiler (decal wrapped), 20-inch black alloy wheels with red

inserts, and bold “EVEREST” lettering on the hood—all giving it a more aggressive, standout profile.

Available in Aluminum Metallic and Snowflake White Pearl, this seven-seater SUV is powered by a 2.0L Turbo Diesel engine delivering 170PS and 405Nm of torque, mated to a 6-speed automatic transmission and a 4x2 drivetrain.

Inside, the Everest Sport Special Edition exudes comfort and capability with leather and synthetic leather seating, a 10-inch SYNC 4A touchscreen, wireless charging pad, and a power liftgate for ease of use. Safety remains paramount with features such as 7 airbags, Electronic Stability Program with Traction Control, Hill Launch Assist, Roll Over Mitigation, and an adjustable speed limiter.

Starting at PHP2,194,000, this limited-edition SUV also includes FordPass features and a 5-year warranty for added peace of mind.

For more details, visit the Ford Philippines website or contact the nearest Ford dealership.

HONDA E-CHECKSHEET STREAMLINES AFTER-SALES EXPERIENCE

In a decisive move toward smarter vehicle servicing, Honda Cars Philippines, Inc. (HCPI) is transforming the aftersales experience by introducing a fully digital system across its nationwide dealer network. At the heart of this transformation is the 'Electronic Checksheet' (E-Checksheet) Mobile Service Tablet—a modern solution replacing traditional paperwork with a more seamless, tech-forward process.

Now deployed in all 38 authorized Honda dealerships, the E-Checksheet system equips Service Advisors with mobile tablets that streamline every stage of the customer service journey. From initial vehicle walk-arounds to post-service quality checks, the entire process is now digitally managed. Inspections are conducted via touchscreen interface, allowing advisors

to capture real-time photos and videos, log detailed assessments, and instantly send updates to customers via email. Customers can also digitally sign off on documents, adding another layer of convenience to the experience.

Transparency is a core feature of this upgrade. The digital checklist records all requested and recommended repairs in the system, ensuring customers are well-informed at every step. Once servicing is complete, a separate inspector performs a final quality assurance check—again documented through the E-Checksheet with multimedia evidence to back up any additional work suggestions. It's a move designed to foster greater trust and efficiency in an industry where clarity and accountability are essential.

Another notable integration is the Body Repair and Paint Estimation tool, which

was introduced earlier this year. Now built into the E-Checksheet ecosystem, this module ensures standardized repair costing across all dealers, adhering to the stringent quality benchmarks set by Honda Japan.

The system also aligns with Honda's broader sustainability agenda. By digitizing previously paper-intensive processes, the brand significantly reduces paper consumption across its dealerships—a small but meaningful shift in support of environmental responsibility.

For mobility-savvy customers who expect efficiency, transparency, and eco-conscious innovation, Honda's digital aftersales initiative is a welcome evolution. Bookings can be made online through Honda's official platform, ensuring that every service visit is just a few taps away.



Did you know your Hyundai ownership comes with 24/7 roadside assistance?

24/7 Hyundai Towing Assistance is valid for:

- Any Hyundai model aging 13 years and below.
- Vehicle towing to the nearest Hyundai dealership.
- Hyundai will shoulder maximum of Php 8,000 regular towing assistance and Php 10,000 for flooded vehicle.
- Nationwide towing coverage.
- New vehicle comes with 1 year RSA enrollment.



HYUNDAI EXPANDS ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE COVERAGE

Hyundai Motor Philippines Inc. (HMPH) has taken another step toward delivering worry-free travel experiences by enhancing its Roadside Assistance program. The updated coverage reaffirms the brand's commitment to supporting Filipino motorists through a broader range of emergency services and more inclusive eligibility terms.

Under the updated program, Hyundai vehicles up to 13 years old are now eligible for 24/7 nationwide Emergency Towing Assistance. Whether it's a mechanical breakdown or flooding, owners can request towing to the nearest authorized Hyundai dealership. HMPH will now shoulder up to PHP8,000 for regular towing and up to PHP10,000 for flood-related incidents.

The enhanced program also includes up to PHP3,000 worth of hotel accommodation in emergency situations, ensuring that Hyundai

drivers and passengers are well taken care of while their vehicle is being serviced. These expanded benefits are automatically included for one year with the purchase of new Hyundai vehicles, providing immediate peace of mind from the showroom floor.

Beyond towing, the program also covers minor on-site repairs and personal vehicle-related services, making it a comprehensive support system for drivers navigating unexpected challenges on the road.

To access Roadside Assistance, customers can call the Hyundai Contact Center at (02)-8868-8000 or 0917-868-9000. More details are available at hyundai.com/ph.

With this latest update, Hyundai reinforces its role as a trusted mobility partner, committed not just to delivering advanced automotive technology but also to providing dependable aftersales support that keeps customers moving with confidence.



ISUZU PHILIPPINES CHARTS BOLD COURSE WITH NEW PRESIDENT MIKIO TSUKUI

Isuзу Philippines Corporation (IPC) is accelerating its growth trajectory with the appointment of Mikio Tsukui as its new President. Officially introduced during a formal turnover ceremony, Tsukui succeeds Tetsuya Fujita, who returns to Isuzu Motors Limited in Japan following a successful term at the helm of IPC.

With over 30 years of experience in the Isuzu Group, Tsukui brings a strong international background, having held leadership posts in China, Europe, and

across the ASEAN region. His strategic vision and operational expertise are expected to sharpen IPC's competitive edge as the brand navigates a dynamic and increasingly competitive automotive landscape.

Under his leadership, the outgoing President Fujita was credited with driving forward several transformative initiatives—most notably, the “Road to Progress” campaign, the preview of Isuzu EV trucks, expansion of the dealer network, and the introduction of lifestyle-driven experiences, such as overlanding trips. These milestones

laid the foundation for IPC's forward-looking direction, which Tsukui now aims to elevate further.

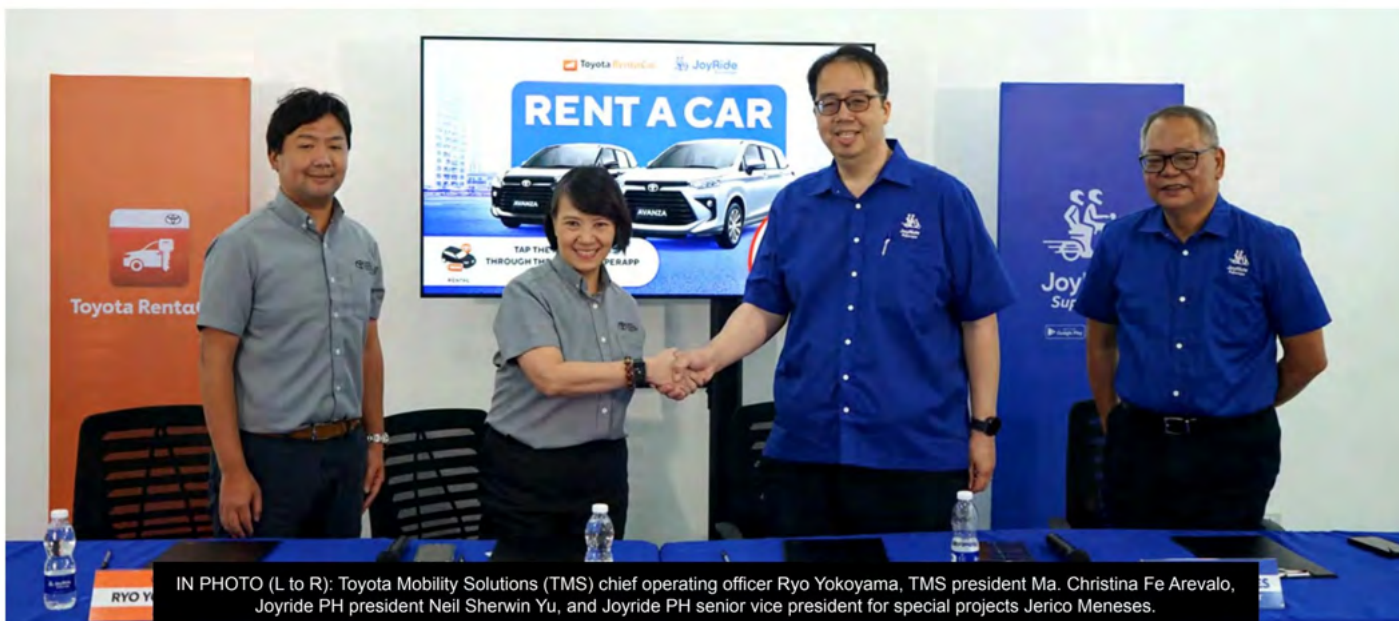
As part of his roadmap, Tsukui is setting his sights on maintaining Isuzu's dominant position as the country's leading truck brand while expanding in the Light Commercial Vehicle (LCV) market. His focus includes launching more aggressive product offerings in the LCV space and expanding the dealership network nationwide to serve a broader base of Filipino consumers.

Tsukui affirmed IPC's strategic priorities in his inaugural address, noting that Isuzu's legacy of durability, customer trust, and strong aftersales service will remain at the core of its operations. “We are committed to delivering transport solutions that are not only reliable but also aligned with the evolving needs of the Philippine market,” he said.

The leadership change comes on the heels of the unveiling of the 2025 Isuzu mu-X, signaling IPC's renewed emphasis on design, innovation, and consumer experience. With Tsukui's global perspective and market insight, IPC is expected to intensify its efforts to solidify its truck segment leadership while making significant strides in the high-potential LCV category.

As Isuzu Philippines moves forward under new leadership, the company is poised to reinforce its brand presence, introduce market-responsive offerings, and deliver greater value to Filipino drivers and businesses.





IN PHOTO (L to R): Toyota Mobility Solutions (TMS) chief operating officer Ryo Yokoyama, TMS president Ma. Christina Fe Arevalo, Joyride PH president Neil Sherwin Yu, and Joyride PH senior vice president for special projects Jerico Meneses.

BOOK YOUR TOYOTA RENTACAR ON JOYRIDE

Toyota RentACar, Toyota Motor Philippines' official car rental service, has officially partnered with JoyRide, the leading mobility superapp, to offer travelers convenient long-term car rental solutions.

The collaboration empowers customers with the flexibility to book extended rentals for multi-day getaways or multi-stop adventures—all within the JoyRide Superapp.

Expanding Access to Mobility Solutions

Managed by Toyota Mobility Solutions Philippines (TMSPH), Toyota RentACar provides a wide selection of vehicles—from sedans to SUVs and vans—available to be self-driven or chauffeur-driven. Customers can choose rental durations ranging from as short as 10 hours to as long as 3 years, depending on their specific travel and mobility requirements.

Through this strategic partnership between TMSPH and Joyride PH Corporation, customers can now book Toyota RentACar services directly through the JoyRide Superapp. Travelers arriving at NAIA terminals—or other designated pickup locations across Metro Manila—can seamlessly reserve vehicles for longer durations.

This service is especially advantageous for passengers based outside Metro Manila, those with multiple planned destinations, or anyone seeking a more personalized and flexible travel experience.

This integration enhances the user experience by offering a hassle-free and scalable solution for both immediate and extended car rental needs.

Streamlined Booking and Multiple Payment Options

To avail of the service, users simply need to download the JoyRide Superapp

and select the car rental feature. First-time renters will be required to register on the Toyota RentACar website. Payments can be made through various channels, including e-wallets, credit or debit cards via the Superapp, or directly at Toyota RentACar branches using cash or card options. The service will initially launch in Metro Manila.

Driving Mobility Forward

In response to the evolving demands of modern travelers, this partnership between Toyota RentACar and JoyRide signifies a joint commitment to improving transportation accessibility and customer satisfaction. The shared goal is to enhance mobility services in and beyond Metro Manila—ultimately contributing to a more connected and commuter-friendly Philippines.

For more information on booking and rental options, visit Toyota RentACar or download the JoyRide Superapp today.

PHILIPPINES
YAMAHA TECHNICIAN
GRAND PRIX
2025
NATIONAL TECHNICIAN GRAND PRIX

YAMAHA NATIONAL TECHNICIAN GRAND PRIX 2025

Elevating Excellence in Motorcycle Service



When you think of Yamaha, what comes to mind might be the rush of a powerful engine, the sleek silhouette of a motorcycle cutting through city traffic, or the thrill of the racetrack. But behind every machine's flawless performance is the unsung hero of the Yamaha experience—the technician.



After a seven-year hiatus, the **Yamaha National Technician Grand Prix (NTGP)** returned in 2025 to give these heroes the spotlight they deserve. Staged at Festival Mall Alabang – East Hall on May 17, 2025, this landmark event was a celebration of world-class Filipino skill, precision service, and Yamaha’s unwavering dedication to technical excellence.

The Road Back: A Legacy Rekindled

The NTGP isn’t just any competition. First held in 2012 and last seen in 2018, it has been the gold standard for measuring Yamaha technicians’ skills across the country. Its 2025 revival was met with excitement and anticipation, signaling Yamaha Motor Philippines’ deeper push to elevate service standards and empower the mechanics behind its brand promise of quality and trust.

But the NTGP is more than a stage for showmanship—it’s the culmination of Yamaha’s Technical Academy (YTA) program, a globally recognized

training curriculum that ensures technicians not only meet but exceed international standards.

A Nation Competes: 345 Entries, 10 Finalists

From dealerships nationwide, 345 Yamaha-certified mechanics signed up for a chance to compete. The journey wasn’t easy. First came the pre-qualifying exams at the dealership level, filtering those with the sharpest minds and strongest work ethic. Then came the Regional Technician Grand Prix, a rigorous written test probing their understanding of Yamaha products, mechanical theory, and diagnostic skills.





From this grueling selection emerged ten finalists, hailed as the top-tier elite:

1. **Cristoper Ian J. Linao** | 3S
MOTORCENTRAL GEN. TRIAS
2. **Rodelio D. Cruz** | 3S MNC
RODRIGUEZ
3. **Leo Dumalag** | 3S CDO 2 CYCLE,
LAPASAN CDO
4. **Marvin E. Tagactac** | 3S
SUPERBIKES GMA CAVITE
5. **Mark Joseph Mallari** | 3S DES
MARKETING SAN MIGUEL
6. **Armando De Guzman** | 3S
MMC NAVOTAS



7. **Carlo R. Balines** | 3S
MOTORCENTRAL SAN PEDRO
8. **Jhoeherson M. Delos Santos** |
3S DES MARKETING IBAJAY
9. **Mark Franklin Cunanan** | 3S
ROYCE CABANATUAN 1
10. **Jemuel S. Fajardo** | 3S
MOTORCENTRAL STO. TOMAS
BATANGAS

More Than Wrenches and Wires: The Dual Challenge

The final round at Festival Mall tested not only technical brilliance but also human connection—two qualities Yamaha believes define exceptional service.

Customer Handling Challenge

In this simulated after-service scenario, finalists had five minutes to walk a mock customer through the work done on their motorcycle—explaining repairs, offering maintenance tips,

and reinforcing Yamaha's service philosophy. Each exchange was projected to the audience, putting technicians under a microscope in real time. The goal: demonstrate not just knowledge, but empathy, clarity, and trustworthiness.

This challenge emphasized that a great mechanic isn't just someone who fixes engines—but someone who communicates solutions, instills confidence, and represents Yamaha's values face-to-face with the customer.

Technical Skills Challenge

If the first challenge tested soft skills, this was a battle of pure technical prowess.

Using Yamaha's proprietary Diagnostic Tool, each finalist had 60 minutes to identify and resolve a simulated issue in a Yamaha motorcycle. The Diagnostic Tool, which connects

N. TRIAS



to the bike's Engine Control Unit (ECU), allows real-time monitoring, system resets, and comprehensive troubleshooting.

Tackling the same problem under time pressure revealed not only who knew their machines best—but who could stay calm, calculated, and consistent when it counted.

The Best of the Best

When the dust settled, one name stood above the rest:

Champion: Leo Dumlalag

Representing 3S CDO 2 Cycle Marketing in Lapasan, Cagayan de Oro, Leo's poised communication and technical precision earned him the top prize. His reward: a brand-new Yamaha Aerox, ¥40,000, and the privilege of representing the Philippines at the World Technician



Grand Prix in Japan on November 19, 2025.

“It’s more than winning,” Leo shared. “It’s about proving that Filipino technicians are world-class. We’re ready to take on the global stage.”

1st Runner-up: Jemuel Fajardo

From 3S Motorcentral Sto. Tomas, Batangas, Jemuel delivered a near-flawless performance and missed the top spot by a hair. He took home PHP50,000 and a proud place in the top three.

2nd Runner-up: Christopher Ian Linao

Hailing from 3S Motorcentral General Trias, Christopher not only placed

third (with a PHP30,000 prize) but also won the coveted Customer Service Award for his outstanding handling during the customer challenge. He received a special Yamaha helmet to mark his achievement.

The remaining finalists were awarded PHP5,000 each for qualifying at the national level—an honor few have achieved in Yamaha’s history.

Beyond Competition: A Culture of Excellence

The NTGP isn’t just a contest. It’s Yamaha’s way of investing in its people. The brand sees its technicians not as background players but as ambassadors—upholding the integrity of every product through service that reflects global standards.





By reigniting the NTGP, Yamaha continues to build a culture of continuous improvement, trust, and empowerment, aligned with its global slogan: “Revs your Heart.”

Looking Ahead: One Heart, One Champion

As Leo Dumlaga prepares for his journey to the World Technician Grand Prix in Japan, he carries not only the Philippine flag but also the

hopes and pride of every Yamaha service professional in the country.

His story is proof that excellence doesn't always roar—it sometimes hums steadily under the hood, waiting for its chance to shine.

Stay in the Loop

Get the latest on Leo's journey and Yamaha's upcoming events by following:

Stay updated by following the Yamaha socials:

LIFESTYLE: <https://www.facebook.com/yamahaphilippines>

RACING: <https://www.facebook.com/yamaharacingph>

YCLUB: <https://www.facebook.com/yclubphilippines>

INSTAGRAM: <https://www.instagram.com/yamahaphilippines/>

YOUTUBE: <https://www.youtube.com/yamahaph>

TIKTOK: <https://www.tiktok.com/yamahaph>

TWITTER: https://x.com/yamaha_ph



Gaming

CLAIR OBSCUR

EXPEDITION

Words by Jose Alvarez



DEVELOPER

Sandfall Interactive

PUBLISHER

Kepler Interactive

PLATFORM

PC, PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X/S

Volume 25 No. 10

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Game development is, more often than not, a non-linear process. Developing games can take years or even decades, as we have seen with high-profile games such as *Grand Theft Auto VI* or the much-anticipated *Half-Life 3*. But what if you take the path less traveled? Guillaume Broche, an ex-Ubisoft employee, sought help on Reddit and SoundCloud with *Clair Obscur: Expedition 33*, drawing inspiration from popular RPGs such as *Final Fantasy*, made it turn-based (gasp!), and even got high-profile voice actors such as Andy Serkis (who voiced Gollum from *Lord of the Rings*, Captain Haddock in *The Adventures of Tintin*, and Supreme Leader Snoke in the first two *Star Wars* sequel films) to make *Clair Obscur: Expedition 33*, leading gamers to ask the question: can you have fun making games and achieve the financial success that shareholders want?



Clair Obscur: Expedition 33 brings together old-school RPGs with current graphical capabilities. While playing, I noticed that my setup struggled at max settings, so those with older PCs may need to turn down the settings to enjoy it. The game takes place in a dark fantasy Belle Epoque setting (late 19th-century France) and centers on groups of explorers grouped into Expeditions, where the Paintress, mimicking Thanos of *Avengers* fame, paints a decreasing number, where those with an age above that number disappear in an event called the Gommage. Expedition 33 is now tasked with finding and fighting the Paintress—and finding out what happened to the previous expeditions as well.



While a turn-based game is considered passé to modern gamers, there are real-time elements to this game, namely dodging and parrying. Those with slower reflexes may struggle with this, but you can adjust the window to make it easier (or harder, if you're a masochist). You can gain ability points (AP) by attacking regularly, and then using AP to use ranged attacks or skills. During skills, you can do a quick time event (usually pressing a button at a precise moment) for additional effects. On enemy turns, you can dodge, parry, or jump; parrying is a lot harder than dodging, so you will need to get the enemy's attacks down to a science. In addition, if you hit enemy weak points with ranged attacks and/or hit them with a skill they are weak against, you can break their stamina bar, you can stun them, and prevent

them from taking a turn. Status effects can also be applied, most notably Burn, to do additional damage.

Each character is unique. Luna, a mage, can apply elemental stains to enemies, making them weak against that element; Maelle, a fencer, has stances that can alter her damage, skills, or defense; and Sciel, a scythe-wielding warrior, can hit enemies with magical cards that can stack damage and consume them for devastating effect. Combat encounters can reward experience, currency, and upgrades. Upon leveling up, you can use skill points to increase core stats such as Vitality (health), Might (attack power), Agility (frequency of attack), Defense (damage reduction), and Luck (critical rate).





You can also equip weapons and Pictos, which give you perks and stat improvements; after a certain number of battles, you can master them and unlock the passive bonuses known as Lumina for others to use. You can gain Lumina through leveling up or by finding it in the game. You can also level up weapons using Chroma Catalysts. You can save at previous Expedition flags, fast travel between them, and learn about the previous Expeditions as you explore the continent. Numerous side quests and a New Game Plus mode give the game more replayability.

One of my biggest pet peeves (as an OCD game saver from back in the day) is that the game has no manual save option; you automatically save at your camp or before a story event. Otherwise, the game's music is very enthralling and varied, which kept me engaged. The game became so acclaimed that the current President of France, Emmanuel Macron, stated that the game was "a shining example of French audacity and creativity."

Clair Obscur: Expedition 33 is a great example of having fun while creating games with an engaging story, while reminding both gamers and developers that certain game genres still have value. As of this writing, there are also plans for a movie based on the game. I have always loved turn-based RPGs, and this is proof that the genre is still alive and kicking.

EPSON FOR THE FUTURE OFFICE: SMART, SUSTAINABLE WORKSPACE INNOVATION



As Filipino businesses evolve toward hybrid work, digitization, and sustainable operations, Epson is delivering tools that match these shifts with precision, reliability, and intelligence. From heat-free printing to data-efficient scanning and immersive projection, Epson's technologies are reshaping the modern workplace for performance, adaptability, and long-term value.

RETHINKING OFFICE PRINTING WITH HEAT-FREE TECHNOLOGY

In most offices, printing remains a mission-critical function; however, traditional laser printers often come with high energy consumption, mechanical wear, and prolonged warm-up times. Epson's Heat-Free Technology offers a better way. By eliminating the need for heat in the ink ejection process, Epson inkjet printers reduce power consumption by up to 83% compared to laser printers, deliver faster first-page output, and improve overall machine reliability.

83% compared to laser printers, deliver faster first-page output, and improve overall machine reliability.

The benefits are immediate: decreased energy use, improved uptime, and a smoother printing experience for frontline staff and IT teams alike. These improvements align with modern workspace demands for both sustainability and efficiency, making Epson a strategic partner in office transformation.

DIGITIZATION AT THE SPEED OF BUSINESS

With businesses prioritizing digital workflows, Epson's document scanners help bridge the physical and digital divide. By converting printed files into searchable, shareable digital assets, these tools support faster information access, more secure archiving, and greater overall productivity.

Whether used in back-office archiving or customer-facing transactions, these scanning tools reduce paper dependency and enable faster, more reliable decision-making. In sectors like finance, education, healthcare, and government, this shift not only supports compliance and collaboration but also reduces operational bottlenecks.



"We empower businesses to build systems that solve today's challenges and are ready for what's next," said Masako Kusama, president and director of Epson Philippines. "Our innovation approach gives organizations the flexibility to adapt quickly and move forward with confidence."

These systems foster workflow alignment, simplify collaboration, and support agility, whether for startups or large enterprises navigating digital transformation.

VISUAL COLLABORATION WITHOUT LIMITS

In an increasingly hybrid work environment, seamless communication is essential. Epson's laser projectors are designed for these new dynamics, offering superior color brightness, 20,000 hours of near-zero-maintenance performance, and high-resolution clarity.

With these tools, teams can share insights, align strategies, and collaborate visually—whether across the table or across time zones. From immersive boardroom sessions to flexible classroom setups, Epson's visual technologies elevate collaboration to new heights.

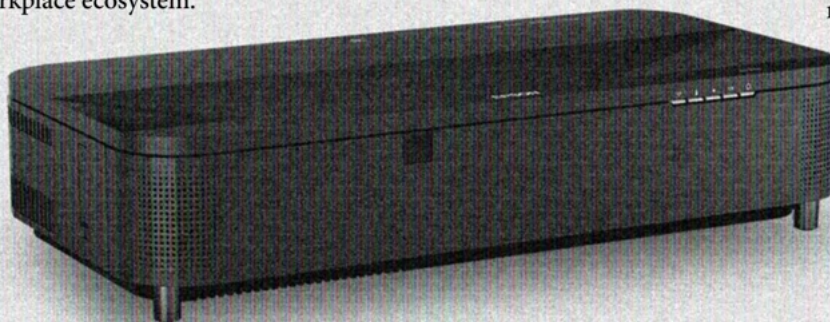
SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION AT THE CORE

True workspace innovation is incomplete without a focus on environmental responsibility. Epson's business technologies reflect a philosophy of "efficient, compact, and precise" design—enabling lower energy use, smaller carbon footprints, and reduced waste without sacrificing performance.

"At Epson, we believe true innovation only matters when it creates shared value," Kusama emphasized. "We design technology that drives business growth while advancing goals around intelligence, collaboration, and responsible resource use."

BUILDING MODULAR, SCALABLE WORKSPACES

Beyond individual devices, Epson's solutions are built for integration. Designed with modularity in mind, they can grow alongside the needs of a business, minimizing disruption while supporting a connected, scalable workplace ecosystem.



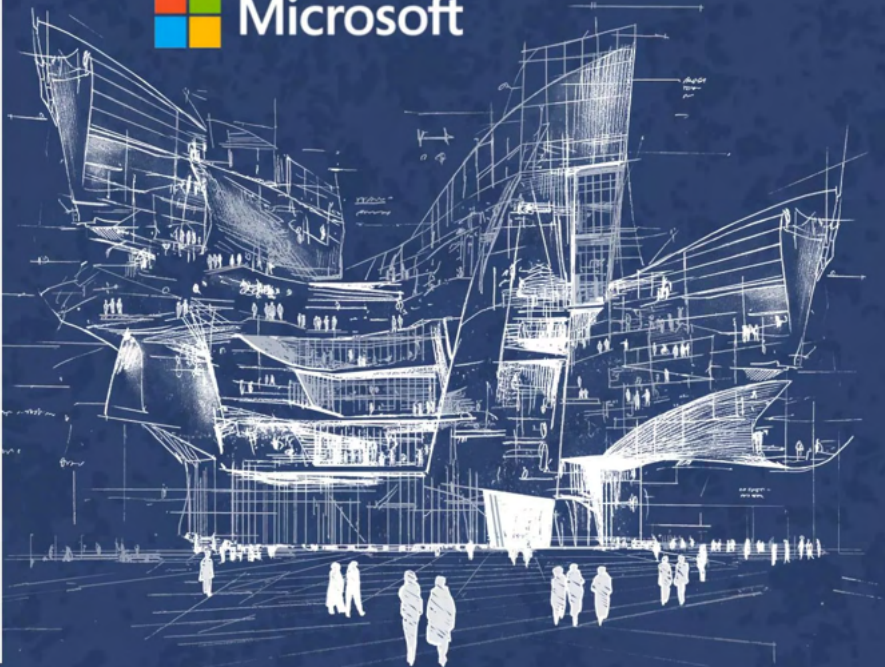
By embedding sustainability into core product functions, Epson empowers Filipino businesses to modernize with purpose and lead with impact.

'FRONTIER FIRMS' ON THE RISE AS AI RESHAPES WORK

Microsoft's 2025 Work Trend Index Report introduces the rise of "frontier firms" — businesses that are not simply adopting AI but reimagining their core strategies, operations, and workforce structures to fully harness its potential.

In its annual research initiative on the state of work, Microsoft reveals that we're entering a new era—one defined by "intelligence on tap" and the rise of AI-powered organizations, spotlighting a critical turning point for organizations in the Philippines as they embrace the transformative power of artificial intelligence.

"Filipino organizations are standing at the edge of a major transformation. The emergence of the Frontier Firm marks a new chapter in how we think about work, where AI becomes a co-pilot, not just a tool. It's no longer about keeping up, it's about building the future of work, today," according to Peter Maquera, CEO of Microsoft Philippines.



The Urgency for Transformation is Clear

In the Philippines, 86% of business leaders believe 2025 is a pivotal year to rethink their strategies and operations, aligning closely with the global sentiment of 82%. Yet, as the pressure to boost productivity mounts, a growing disconnect has emerged between expectations and reality. Nearly half of Filipino leaders

(46%) believe productivity must increase, but 53% of employees report that they lack the time and energy to perform at their best, indicating that while demand for output is rising, the current way of working is unsustainable. AI has emerged as the solution to bridge this gap.

Filipino Leaders are Embracing AI at Scale

A significant 89% say they are confident their organizations will be using AI agents as digital team members within the next 12 to 18 months. This optimism is driving the development of new workforce models, with 42% citing the expansion of team capacity through digital labor as a top business priority, second only to upskilling at 44%. Notably, a third of local leaders (33%) are considering reducing headcount, signaling that AI is no longer just about enhancing how work gets done, but also reshaping who does it. To support this shift, 80% of leaders in the country plan to hire for AI-focused roles within the next year.

“With intelligence now scalable and on demand, Filipino leaders have a unique opportunity to close the productivity gap and reimagine workforce capacity. AI is not replacing human potential—it’s unlocking it in entirely new ways,” Maquera said.

Human-Agent Teams: The New Org Chart

As AI becomes embedded in the workplace, Filipino organizations are evolving into human-agent teams. Already, 44% of leaders report using AI agents to fully automate business processes across entire teams or functions. Workers are increasingly comfortable relying on AI, with 44% saying they prefer it over a colleague due to its 24/7 availability. This is followed by AI’s speed and quality of work (32%), as well as its capacity to generate unlimited creative ideas (29%). When it comes to how AI is used, 46% of employees treat it like a thought partner, while 53% still rely on it as a command-based tool, highlighting an ongoing shift in user behavior and workplace dynamics.

According to Maquera, AI is reshaping what teams look like, from the frontline to the boardroom. The rise of human-agent collaboration means we must rethink traditional roles and invest in the right tools, training, and trust to empower every worker to thrive in this new environment.

Welcome to the Era of the Agent Boss

This shift is giving rise to a new breed of leader: the agent boss. Over the next five years, leaders in the Philippines expect their teams to play a central role in redesigning business processes using AI (46%), building multi-agent systems to automate complex tasks (54%), training agents (48%), and managing them (41%). However, a knowledge gap remains—while 60% of leaders claim familiarity or extreme familiarity with AI agents, only 42% of employees report the same level of familiarity. Bridging this divide will be essential. In fact, 55% of managers expect AI training and upskilling to become a key responsibility for their teams, reinforcing the need for continuous learning and support as AI adoption accelerates.

“Filipinos have always been known for their adaptability and ingenuity. As the world of work evolves, equipping our workforce with AI fluency and digital skills is not just a competitive advantage—it’s essential to driving inclusive growth and innovation across the country,” Maquera said.

To help organizations unlock the full potential of this AI-driven future, Microsoft is expanding its suite of Copilot tools through Copilot Wave 2. These enhancements include new reasoning agents, improved search capabilities, and dynamic creativity features, all designed to make AI more intuitive and impactful for every role, from frontliners to executives.

With Intelligence now truly on tap, organizations in the Philippines are poised to lead a new era of work—one where AI is not just a tool, but a collaborative force that drives strategy, scales operations, and elevates human potential. As more companies evolve into Frontier Firms, those that move early and invest in AI readiness will be the ones to redefine what high performance looks like in the modern workplace.

Read the full 2025 Work Trend Index [HERE](#).
Learn more about Microsoft Copilot and Wave 2 updates [HERE](#).



SM Supermalls emerged victorious at the 2025 Asia-Pacific Stevie® Awards, collecting an impressive array of accolades, including the prestigious Grand Stevie Award for Most Honored Organization of the Year — a historic recognition shared by SM Supermalls, SM Foundation, and SM Retail under the SM Group.

With a total of 42 award points, the SM Group stood tall as the most celebrated organization across Asia-Pacific this year, solidifying its reputation as a trailblazer in innovation, sustainability, and meaningful community impact.

SM Supermalls' 12 Stevie Awards were formally received during the APAC Stevie Awards Banquet held on May 13 at the Lotte Hotel in Seoul, South Korea, by SM Supermalls' Joaquin L. San Agustin, EVP for Marketing; Jefferson S. Suarez, Senior AVP for North Luzon Marketing; and, Richard A. Caluyo AVP for SM Cares, SM Family Entertainment Center, and Sports & Leisure Center Marketing.

A showcase of Innovation across divisions

Leading with the Gold recognition was the **SM Art Market**, winning the Award for Innovation in the Use of Events. This initiative not only redefined the retail experience but also spotlighted Filipino creativity, turning mall spaces into vibrant hubs for local artisans and cultural expression.

Garnering Silver awards, multiple programs across SM Malls captured attention for their impactful and purpose-driven initiatives:

- **AweSM Visayas Festivals** - Award for Innovation in Community Relations or Public Service Communications
- **SM Davao's Vibrant Kadayawan** - Award for Innovation in the Use of Events
- **SM Cares' Energy Efficiency Journey** - Saving Energy
- **SM Cares' Book Nook** - Award for Innovation in Community Relations or Public Service Communications
- **SM Cares' Innovative CSR Impact** - Innovative Achievement in Corporate Social Responsibility
- **SM Job Fairs** - Award for Innovation in Community Relations or Public Service Communications
- **SM Megamall's Maki-Holo Christmas Spectacle** - Award for Innovation in Entertainment Events

SM Prime continued its winning streak with Bronze recognitions for programs that showcased the group's diversity in storytelling and outreach:

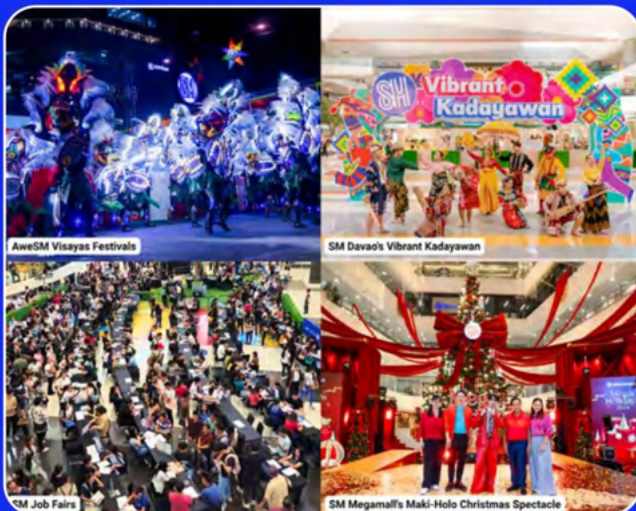
- **SM 100 Days of Joy** - Award for Innovation in Content Marketing/Branded Editorial
- **SM Baguio's Community Initiatives** - Award for Innovation in Community Service or Public Relations
- **SM Cares' Global Youth Summit** - Climate Protection and Sustainability Campaign of the Year
- **SM Aura's Sinag at Saya** - Award for Innovation in the Use of Events



"This recognition is a celebration of how we at SM strive to innovate and evolve to serve the ever-changing needs of our customers," said San Agustin. "We dedicate this honor to every team member, partner, and community who make our mission of service come to life."

The Asia-Pacific Stevie® Awards are the only business awards program that recognizes innovation in the workplace across the Asia-Pacific region. In 2025, the awards honored organizations from 23 markets, including Australia, China, India, Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam, among others.

With its 2025 wins, SM Supermalls reaffirms its standing not only as a retail leader, but also as a force for positive change in the Asia-Pacific region, fueled by innovation, collaboration, and an unwavering passion to uplift lives.



HOW BRANDS CAN KEEP PINOYS TAPPING

ADJUST reveals mobile app growth secrets

As Filipino consumers spend more time on mobile than ever, brands are facing an urgent challenge: standing out in a market overflowing with apps. From finance to retail to food delivery, downloads are surging — but sustainable growth now hinges on keeping users engaged, loyal, and coming back.

This was the central theme of the Growth Funnel Playbook event in Manila, where over 100 marketers came together to hear from industry leaders at Adjust, Google, Sensor Tower and CleverTap.

“We’re entering a phase where install growth is just the beginning,” said April Tayson, Adjust regional vice president for INSEAU. “Being the most downloaded app is not enough – it’s about being the most retained, most used, and most valued. At Adjust, we help brands measure and understand user behavior, optimize retention strategies, and make data-driven decisions that fuel long-term engagement and growth.”

Manish Wali, Head Of Inside Sales APAC



According to Apps Performance Insights from Sensor Tower, finance apps in the Philippines reached nearly 200 million downloads in 2024, with credit and lending apps growing over 30% year-on-year. Retail apps like Temu have also experienced strong growth, driven by gamified and discovery-based shopping experiences. Additionally, the Philippines now leads Southeast Asia in food delivery app installs, capturing the largest share (23%) of Food & Drink app downloads and ranking second in average daily time spent on these apps.

Yet, despite rising installs, retention remains a hurdle for brands.



Adjust's Guide to Maximizing Retention and Engagement in the Philippine App Landscape

Supporting these trends, Adjust shared insights from its latest **Mobile App Trends Report**, highlighting that while global install growth is robust, real performance lies in deeper engagement and smarter measurement. Highlights include:

- **Finance app installs rose 27% YoY, with APAC accounting for a significant share at 41% YoY growth.** To maximize engagement, brands personalize user experiences and apply regional targeting – supported by tools such as **deep linking** and **web-to-app tracking** – to ensure users land exactly where they are expected to within the app.
- **Shopping app installs grew 28% YoY but saw shorter session lengths**, underscoring the trend toward faster, more efficient user experiences. Brands can streamline the shopping journey with AI-driven recommendations, reducing friction and improving conversion rates. **Incrementality testing** and advanced attribution modeling can also reveal which strategies drive true engagement and measure cross-channel impact.
- **Retention rates for both finance and shopping remain below 10% by day 30**, indicating a strong need to increase post-install engagement. Brands can improve retention with tactics like gamified onboarding, personalized push notifications and loyalty rewards. Audience segmentation and re-engagement tools support more precise retargeting campaigns, while omnichannel attribution and fraud prevention ensure accurate performance tracking and protect budgets from invalid traffic.



FROM L-R) Ajit Pawar, Adjust director Of Partnerships, APAC, Lisa Kosdi, Adjust App Growth consultant, Alison Nguyen, Adjust App Growth consultant, April Tayson, Adjust Regional vice president for INSEAU, Manish Wali, head of Inside Sales APAC



Bruce Nguyen, Google Apps Growth and Acquisition Lead SEA

“In the Philippines’ fast-growing app market, brands must now shift their focus from growth alone to sustained performance,” Tayson added. “By leveraging data-driven insights, marketers can optimize the user experience, turning installs into loyal, long-term customers. This is how brands in the Philippines, and the rest of Southeast Asia, can win the long game.”

To explore more findings, industry best practices and learn more about Adjust, visit <https://www.adjust.com>.



2025 CYBERSECURITY READINESS INDEX

Cisco study reveals alarming deficiencies in security readiness

According to Cisco's 2025 Cybersecurity Readiness Index, only 6 percent of organizations in the Philippines have achieved the 'Mature' level of readiness required to effectively withstand today's cybersecurity threats. This is a slight increase from last year's Index, in which 1% of organizations in the Philippines were designated as Mature. This demonstrates that despite a slight improvement from last year, cybersecurity preparedness remains low as hyperconnectivity and AI introduce new complexities for security practitioners.

AI is revolutionizing security and escalating threat levels, with 8 in 10 organizations (85%) facing AI-related security incidents last year. However, only 71% of respondents are confident their employees fully understand AI-related threats, and 59% believe their teams fully grasp how malicious actors are using AI to execute sophisticated attacks. This awareness gap leaves organizations critically exposed.

AI is compounding an already challenging threat landscape. In the last year, more than half of organizations (54%) experienced cyberattacks, hindered by complex security frameworks that utilize disparate point solutions. Looking forward, respondents view external threats, such as malicious actors and state-affiliated groups (54%), as more significant to their organizations than internal threats (46%), underscoring the urgent need for streamlined defense strategies to thwart external attacks.

“As AI transforms the enterprise, we are dealing with an entirely new class of risks at unprecedented scale - putting even more pressure on our infrastructure and those who defend it,” said Cisco chief product officer Jeetu Patel. “This year’s report continues to reveal alarming gaps in security readiness and a lack of urgency to address them. Organizations must rethink their strategies now or risk becoming irrelevant in the AI era.”

Cybersecurity Readiness Remains Low as AI Transforms the Industry

The Index evaluates companies’ readiness across five pillars—**Identity Intelligence, Network Resilience, Machine Trustworthiness, Cloud Reinforcement, and AI Fortification**—encompassing 31 solutions and capabilities. Based on a double-blind survey of 8,000 private sector security and business leaders in 30 global markets, respondents detailed their deployment stages for each solution. Companies were then categorized into four readiness stages: Beginner, Formative, Progressive, and Mature.

Findings

The lack of cybersecurity readiness in the Philippines is alarming, as 75% of respondents anticipate business disruptions from cyber incidents within the next 12 to 24 months. Further:

- **AI’s Expanding Role in Cybersecurity:** An impressive 93% of organizations utilize AI to understand threats better, 84% for threat detection, and 84% for response and recovery, underscoring AI’s vital role in strengthening cybersecurity strategies.
- **GenAI Deployment Risks:** GenAI tools are widely adopted, with organizations in the Philippines saying that 57% of their employees are using approved third-party tools. However, 20% of employees have unrestricted access to public GenAI, and 52% of IT teams are unaware of employee interactions with GenAI, underscoring significant oversight challenges.
- **Shadow AI Concerns:** 57% of organizations lack confidence in detecting unregulated AI deployments, also known as shadow AI, which poses significant cybersecurity and data privacy risks.
- **Unmanaged Device Vulnerability:** Within hybrid work models, 92% of organizations face increased security risks as employees access networks from unmanaged devices, which is further exacerbated by the use of unapproved Gen AI tools.

- **Investment Priorities Shift:** While 98% of organizations plan to upgrade their IT infrastructure, only 49% allocate more than 10% of their IT budget to cybersecurity (down 13% year-over-year), emphasizing a critical need for more focused investment in comprehensive defense strategies, which is incredibly important as threats are not slowing.
- **Complex Security Postures:** 82% of organizations report that their complex security infrastructures, dominated by the deployment of more than 10 point security solutions, are impeding their ability to respond swiftly and effectively to threats.
- **Talent Shortage Impedes Progress:** A staggering 90% of respondents identify the shortage of skilled cybersecurity professionals as a major challenge, with 52% reporting more than ten positions to fill.

To address today’s cybersecurity challenges, organizations must invest in AI-driven solutions, streamline their security infrastructures, and enhance their AI threat awareness. Prioritizing AI for threat detection, response, and recovery is essential, as is addressing talent shortages and managing risks from unmanaged devices and shadow AI.

“AI opens up new possibilities but also adds complexity to an already challenging security landscape. Over the past year, we have seen companies worldwide, including those in the Philippines, continue to grapple with evolving threats like the rise of shadow AI, talent shortages, and complex security infrastructures. This underscores the need for a different approach to security— one that not only leverages AI for security but also ensures AI itself is secure and scalable,” said Zaza Soriano-Nicart, managing director, Cisco Philippines.

Additional Resources:

- [Microsite](#)
- [Cybersecurity Readiness Assessment](#)

CALL FOR ENTRY THE EPSON INTERNATIONAL PANO AWARDS

Epson has announced a call for entries for the 16th edition of the landmark photography competition, The Epson International Pano Awards. Following a successful 2024 event, Epson Southeast Asia joins Epson Australia once more as the main sponsors of The Pano Awards, which Epson has helped grow into one of the world's largest competitions devoted to the craft and art of panoramic photography. In 2024, The Epson International Pano Awards saw 4,529 entries submitted

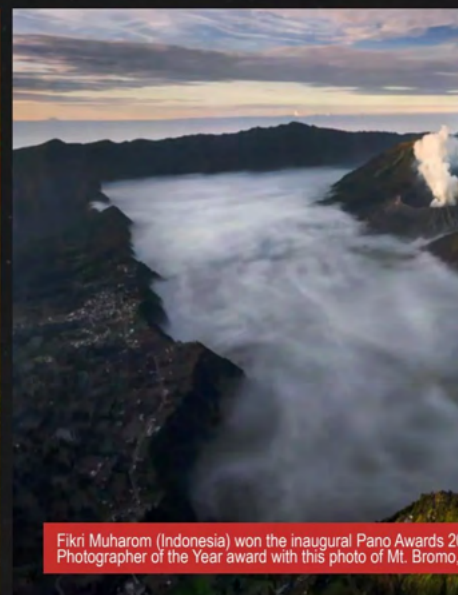
from 1,105 photographers across 95 countries.

"It gives me great pleasure to officially announce that professional and amateur photographers around the world are now invited to enter the 16th Epson International Pano Awards," says David Evans, The Epson International Pano Awards' Curator. "We are incredibly thankful to the incredible support from our invaluable sponsors to be able to reduce entry fees in 2025, making the competition more accessible than ever. The

prize pool this year is again well in excess of USD50,000, including USD15,000 in cash and for the Open winner – a package exceeding USD11,000"

Jocelyn Tan, regional deputy director, commercial products, Epson Southeast Asia, says, "We are proud to support the 16th edition of The Epson International Pano Awards, once again partnering with Epson Australia to spotlight the exceptional talent from Southeast Asia and beyond. This milestone reflects the awards' enduring relevance in the global photography

Blissful Moment by Brix Tan (The Philippines)



Fikri Muharom (Indonesia) won the inaugural Pano Awards 2016 Photographer of the Year award with this photo of Mt. Bromo.

RIES: INTERNATIONAL

community. At Epson, we remain committed to empowering photographers through cutting-edge print technology that helps bring their boldest visions to life.”

The judging panel for The 2025 Pano Awards includes some of the world’s top photographers and industry professionals, such as Pano Awards 2023 Amateur Photographer of the Year Merche Llobera, Pano Awards 2024 Open Photographer of the Year Kelvin Yuen, Pano Awards 2020 Open Photographer of the Year Matt Jackisch, and more.



Hear more from previous Pano Awards winners at the following links:

1 Compilation:



2 David Evans:



3 Paul Hoelen:



4 Mieke Boynton:



5 Tom Putt:



Early-bird entries for the Epson International Pano Awards 2025 are now open until Monday, 30 June 2025, and final entries are due by Monday, 21 July 2025.

Participants can submit their entries at this link: <https://thepanoawards.com/enter-awards/>

For more information, contact David Evans, Curator contact@thepanoawards.com

#OPPOA5PROSLAY DANCE CHALLENGE



HighPower brings home PHP1M grand prize

Leading global smart device brand OPPO has proven how #OPPOLangSakalam when it comes to empowering Filipinos through durable and reliable technology. In the recently concluded #OPPOA5ProSnapAndSlay Dance Challenge, Filipinos were able to showcase their talent while highlighting the OPPO A5 Pro's Military-Grade Shock Resistance and IP69 Water and Dust Resistance to the test.

HighPower, a 16-member group from Taguig conquered the #OPPOA5ProSnapAndSlay Dance Challenge, dancing their way to the PHP1 million grand prize. Their dynamic and high-energy dance moves stood out from entries, braving different extreme weather conditions and unpredictable situations featuring the OPPO A5 Pro, OPPO's latest and most durable A Series device yet. Watch HighPower's winning entry [HERE](#).

"The #OPPOA5ProSnapAndSlay Dance Challenge was more than just a dance challenge—it was a chance to show our passion with a device that won't let us down. Being part of the #OPPOA5ProSnapAndSlay Dance Challenge pushed us to new heights. Just like the OPPO A5 Pro, we stayed strong, sharp, and unshaken—no matter how intense it got," said HighPower.

The #OPPOA5ProSnapAndSlay Dance Challenge invited dancers and dancers at heart to flaunt their skills while showcasing the OPPO A5 Pro's Military-Grade Shock Resistance and IP69 Water and Dust Resistance. Leading the herd were Ken San Jose, Aira Casim, and Jackie Gonzaga.

Official entries were judged based on choreography, creativity, stage presence, execution/precision and overall impact.

NAP AND SLAY CHALLENGE



**Built to withstand it all
the OPPO A5 Pro**

Fueling the #OPPOA5ProSnapAndSlay Dance Challenge is OPPO's strongest A Series device yet, the OPPO A5 Pro. It can withstand accidental falls from as high as five meters without sustaining any structural damage and also has IP69 water and dust resistance ratings, enabling it to still function even with occasional water mishaps and empowering you to live everyday with less worries that your device will malfunction.

To top it all off, the OPPO A5 Pro's massive 5,800mAh battery will keep you powered for as long as 35.7 hours, helping you to study on-the-go or scroll mindlessly between breaks without hunting for a charger. Its 45W SUPERVOOC fast charging can get you back to 100% in just 83 minutes.

EXPERIENCE THE FUTURE OF ENTERTAINMENT

From cinematic TVs to party-ready sound systems and stylish personal audio, Sony's 2025 product range brings immersive entertainment into every corner of modern life.



Sony Philippines has officially unveiled its 2025 lineup, showcasing a bold vision for the future of entertainment. Introduced at an exclusive preview event, the new product ecosystem encompasses high-end televisions, immersive audio systems, portable speakers, and stylish headphones—each engineered to enhance how Filipinos enjoy content, connect, and create.

Themed “*Experience the Future of Entertainment*,” the launch positions Sony as more than an electronics brand—it’s a creative entertainment powerhouse delivering premium experiences across form factors and lifestyles.

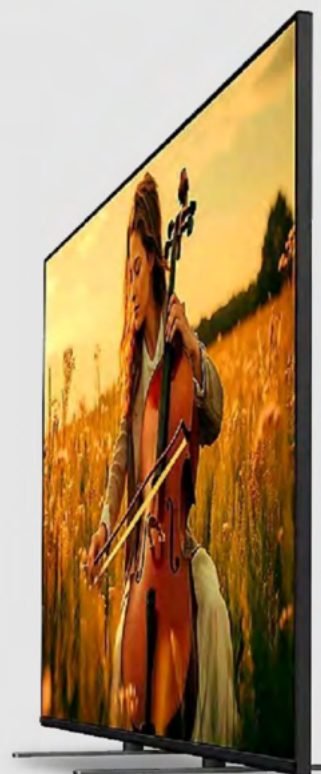


BRAVIA 8 II

BRAVIA 2025: WHERE CINEMA MEETS LIVING ROOM

Leading the home entertainment lineup is the new generation of BRAVIA TVs, featuring the BRAVIA 8 II, BRAVIA 5, and BRAVIA 2 II. Each model integrates Sony's XR Processor with AI scene recognition, delivering next-level visual fidelity from sizes as grand as 98 inches to compact 43-inch variants. The flagship BRAVIA 8 II incorporates XR Triluminos Max™ for superior color range and contrast, paired with Sony's Slim One Slate design—offering a unified, minimalist aesthetic.

The BRAVIA 5 balances affordability and high performance, utilizing XR Backlight Master Drive for precise LED control and vibrant 4K detail. Meanwhile, the BRAVIA 2 II leverages the 4K Processor X1 and 4K X-Reality PRO to upscale HD content with remarkable clarity. Dolby Atmos® and DTS:X® support ensure spatial audio matches the on-screen experience.



BRAVIA 5

BRAVIA THEATRE SYSTEM: IMMERSIVE AUDIO REDEFINED

Sony also expanded its BRAVIA Theatre system with new modular components that pair seamlessly with its TVs. The standout BRAVIA Theatre Bar 9, already a 13-channel Dolby Atmos soundbar with IMAX Enhanced certification, now gains a sibling—the compact BRAVIA Theatre Bar 6.

For users building a full surround setup, the BRAVIA Theatre Rear 8 speakers and Sub 7 wireless subwoofer complete the ecosystem, offering immersive 360 Spatial Sound Mapping and finely tuned bass. Whether streaming a blockbuster or gaming on a console, the result is a high-fidelity experience that rivals commercial cinemas.



BRAVIA Theatre Bar 9



ULT Tower 9

ULT POWER SOUND: MOBILITY MEETS IMPACT

Sony's ULT Power Sound Series injects fun and portability into the brand's audio portfolio. The ULT Tower 9 and ULT Tower 9AC deliver 360° party sound and pulsing light shows for house parties and gatherings, while the ULTMIC1 wireless mic enhances karaoke sessions with seamless audio integration.

On the go, the ULT Field 3 and ULT Field 5 portable speakers are built for outdoor endurance. With IP67-rated water and dust resistance, up to 30 hours of battery life, and bold bass performance at the tap of the ULT button, these speakers are engineered for beach days, picnics, or impromptu park sessions.



ULT Field 5

WF-C710N



PERSONAL AUDIO: DESIGNED FOR EVERYDAY JOY

Sony's updated personal audio range focuses on performance, personalization, and playfulness. The new WF-C710N wireless earbuds offer intelligent noise cancellation, Adaptive Sound Control, and all-day wearability—ideal for professionals, commuters, and casual listeners alike.

Meanwhile, the WH-CH520 on-ear headphones return in playful pink and sunny yellow, combining 50-hour battery life with Multipoint Connection and lightweight comfort. For users seeking a more immersive listening experience, the WH-CH720N noise-cancelling headphones now come in a refined pastel pink.



Sony Philippines' president and managing director, Shuhei Sugihara, welcomed invited guests from the media, tech industry, and select influencers.

A UNIFIED ECOSYSTEM FOR CREATIVE AND CONNECTED LIVING

At the core of Sony's 2025 lineup is a seamless user experience—from cinematic entertainment to creative expression. By integrating intelligent features across devices, Sony is creating an ecosystem that evolves with the user—whether you're hosting a party, relaxing at home, or creating content on the move.

As emphasized during the launch, Sony's strength lies not just in hardware, but in its unique integration of content and technology. "Sony is not only a retail electronics company," said Shuhei Sugihara, president and managing director of Sony Philippines. "It's a total Creative Entertainment company."





Big 3 Startup Showdown

It started with 60 seconds. In just one minute, student teams from UP, La Salle, and Ateneo de Manila University stood before a panel of top tech leaders to pitch their boldest business ideas—no fluff, just vision and execution. What followed was a dynamic showcase of youth innovation at the Big 3 Startup Showdown, a hackathon bringing together the next generation of Filipino changemakers.

From an impressive pool of participants, three teams emerged as winners:

- **LittleBranch:** The go-to portal for discovering over 1,000 exciting kids' activities across the Philippines, helping parents find the best experiences for every child.
- **Quasar:** The first all-in-one, AI powered platform for automating loan approval services in the Philippines.
- **Venyyu:** the largest one-stop sport venue booking platform with over 1,000 courts in Metro Manila. Find, book, and play in minutes.

The final event was held at the Maya Headquarters, Launchpad Building, where student entrepreneurs delivered fast-paced pitches and high-impact solutions, proving that the country's most exciting startups might just be brewing in the halls of its top universities.

Industry leaders joined the judging panel, including Maya chief product officer Mitch Padua, mWell CIO Albert Padin, Google Philippines customer engineer Loys Talip, and Gobi Core founding partner Carlo Delantar,



The winning student teams at the maiden Big 3 Startup Showdown with guest judges led by Maya chief product officer Mitch Padua (extreme right).

offering critical feedback and real-world insights. The winning teams also earned a PHP30,000 cash prize each to support their upcoming participation in Geeks on a Beach 2025, a global beachside tech conference where game-changing ideas are pitched to global investors and thought leaders.

“We witnessed incredible ingenuity from these top universities—ideas grounded in real-world problems and driven by purpose,” said Mitch Padua, Maya Group chief product officer. “That’s the magic of young innovators: they’re not just coding

“That’s the magic of young innovators: they’re not just coding apps—they’re crafting solutions. At Maya, we’re proud to champion that mindset. It’s exactly how we began—by daring to reimagine the way things are done.”

apps—they’re crafting solutions. At Maya, we’re proud to champion that mindset. It’s exactly how we began—by daring to reimagine the way things are done.”

Education Remains Key

The showdown was organized with the support of respected faculty from the participating schools, led by Prof. Bowei Gai (La Salle), with the support of Prof. Jose Emmanuel Reverente (UP), and Prof. Joseph Benjamin Ilagan (ADMU).

“This event isn’t just about winning pitches—it’s about opening doors,” shared Gai. “Ateneo, La Salle, and UP worked together on this event with the shared goal of giving students the chance to pitch to real VCs and product leaders and learn how their ideas can translate into real-world solutions. That experience alone is game-changing.”

While the event created numerous opportunities for participants, it also established a new network among the country’s top universities.

“It’s rare—and really special—to see students from UP, La Salle, and Ateneo come together like this. Events like this allow them to go beyond the classroom and see what it really takes to compete at a high level. They get to pitch not just to mentors, but to real investors who challenge them with tough, real-world questions,” added Gai.

“That kind of experience is invaluable—it pushes them to level up, think bigger, and build ventures that not only solve real problems but are also sustainable and investor-ready,” Reverente concluded.

Supporting the Next Generation

Maya proudly served as the main sponsor of the Big 3 Startup Showdown, providing the total cash prize pool awarded to the top three teams. More than just funding, Maya’s support was rooted in its mission to uplift young innovators, encourage bold thinking, and help translate fresh ideas into real-world impact.

The company also took the opportunity to showcase its payments and digital banking products, as well as open internship opportunities, planting long-term seeds for collaboration between today’s industry leaders and tomorrow’s startup founders.

As Maya continues to power financial transformation nationwide, the company also continues to invest in the country’s most promising resource: its people.

Because at the heart of every great startup is the same thing that drives Maya—the belief that with the right tools and support, bold ideas can spark lasting impact.

NTC SmartClass Brings Education Home

In today's hyperconnected world, learning is no longer confined to classrooms. For Filipino families seeking a smarter, more flexible alternative to traditional education, NTC SmartClass offers a bold new vision—one where academic success, real-life skills, and personal growth exist in harmony.

Developed by the National Teachers College (NTC) in partnership with APEC Schools, NTC SmartClass is a tech-enabled homeschooling program for Kinder to Grade 10 learners. But it's more than just remote learning. It's a reimaged educational model designed to fit seamlessly into the rhythm of real Filipino family life.

Beyond the Bell: Learning on Your Own Terms

For students like Gabby, an eighth-grader with a passion for music and church activities, the rigid schedule of traditional school once felt limiting. "Here, you can study however you like," she says of NTC SmartClass. "It fits into my lifestyle." That freedom allows her to stay active beyond academics, nurturing both her personal and spiritual growth.

Meanwhile, tenth-grader Rianne, who frequently travels, appreciates how the platform supports self-directed learning without sacrificing support. Despite living across time zones, she's able to tailor her schedule, consult directly with subject experts, and explore interests like physics

more deeply than in a conventional setting. "It trains you for the future," she says. "We work independently, but also have access to direct guidance."

Their stories point to a growing trend: education that adapts to the learner, not the other way around.

Education as a Family Ecosystem

For parents, NTC SmartClass is equally transformative. Take Jackie and her husband, remote-working professionals in Pangasinan. Juggling careers while managing their children's academic needs used to be a daily challenge—until they discovered SmartClass.

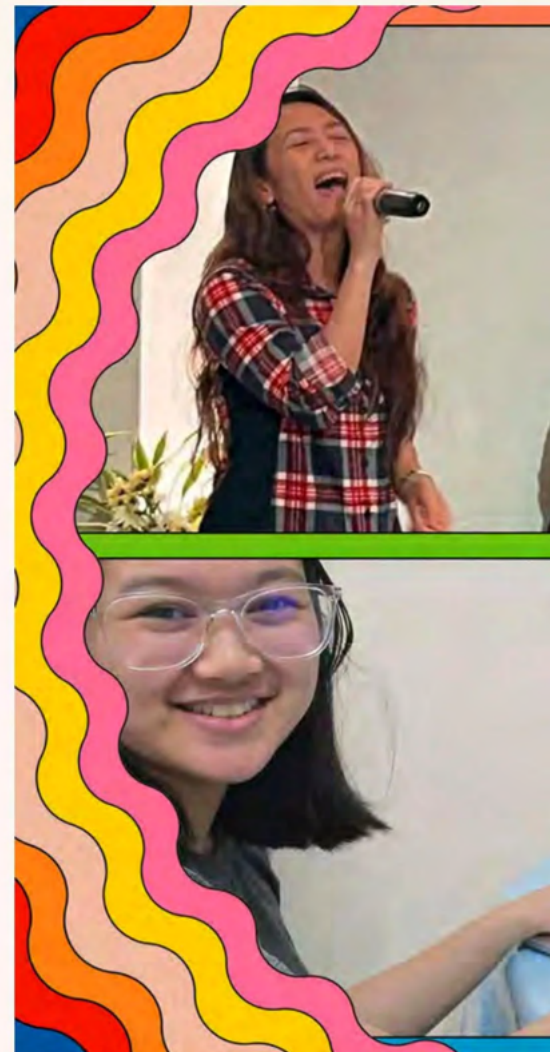
"Because my husband and I both work from home, we were looking for a homeschooling partner that could offer the same hybrid flexibility," Jackie shares. What they found wasn't just convenience—it was empowerment. Their sons now pursue learning with renewed purpose: the eldest took up swimming and surprised the family by winning a local tournament, while the youngest became Jackie's unofficial "video editing teacher," helping with her virtual assistant work.

"It's been wonderful to see them not just learn, but truly live," Jackie reflects.

Powered by Pedagogy—and Tech

At the heart of NTC SmartClass is a learning philosophy grounded in

autonomy, relevance, and purpose. Mary Ann C. Barcelon, instructional design and professional development manager at NTC, leads the team that crafts the program's academic modules and trains its Subject Matter Experts.



A veteran educator and a parent herself—her children are in Grades 2 and 3 under the same program—Barcelon emphasizes that SmartClass isn't about downloading information, but about *working* with it.

“We’re building a learning environment where kids are encouraged to play, explore, and stay curious—without unnecessary stress,” she says.

This is made possible by the program’s “structured flexibility.” Students can design their own schedules, choose the sequence of tasks, and attend live sessions at their preferred pace. Assessments prioritize demonstrated understanding over test scores, and older students tackle real-world issues

through interdisciplinary lessons. It’s education tailored not just for school, but for life.

The Triangle of Support

What sets NTC SmartClass apart is its unique support system that connects parents, academic advisers, and subject matter experts in a collaborative loop. This “triangle of support” ensures that each student receives guidance in all three areas: academically, emotionally, and socially.

It’s a model that echoes best practices in modern pedagogy, emphasizing agency, reflection, and real-world application—key ingredients for developing future-ready learners.

SmartClass, Smarter Futures

As technology continues to disrupt traditional models of education, NTC SmartClass stands out not for replacing the classroom, but for rethinking its very purpose. It’s not just about learning from home—it’s about learning *for* life.

By empowering students to take charge of their own learning, integrating tech with meaningful pedagogy, and bringing the entire family into the education journey, SmartClass exemplifies what next-gen Filipino education can look like: inclusive, flexible, and deeply human.

For Filipino families ready to break free from outdated systems and embrace a more holistic approach, NTC SmartClass isn’t just an option—it’s the future.





LABS by Xinyx

A FLEXIBLE LEARNING PLATFORM FOR IC DESIGN

The Philippines is staking its claim in the global semiconductor value chain—and it's starting in the classroom.

On May 9, 2025, *LABS by Xinyx* officially launched at Colegio de Muntinlupa (CDM), marking a major milestone in the country's technological advancement. Spearheaded by Xinyx Design, one of Southeast Asia's largest fabless IC (integrated circuit) design houses, the initiative is the country's first premium, flexible learning platform dedicated entirely to IC Design and Microelectronics.

This groundbreaking program arrives at a critical moment. As global industries—from AI and aerospace to automotive and defense—race to secure semiconductor innovation, the Philippines is stepping up not just as a manufacturer but as a design and R&D hub. With *LABS by Xinyx*, local talent is being equipped with the skills,

tools, and guidance to compete on the world stage.

A Learning Platform Built for Industry Realities

Unlike conventional academic programs, LABS by Xinyx is designed for real-world readiness. It supplements traditional BS Electronics Engineering curricula and offers a parallel path for a broad range of learners: senior high school students, STEM graduates, educators, and industry professionals.

Course delivery is flexible—offered online, in-person, or hybrid—and features hands-on training, mentorship from seasoned engineers, and globally aligned content tailored to the dynamic needs of the semiconductor industry.

"LABS by Xinyx is the Philippines' first premium, flexible platform focused on IC Design and Microelectronics," said Charade Avondo, president of

Xinyx Design. "It's designed to close the skills gap that limits the growth of our semiconductor industry."

A National Imperative, a Local Response

The launch of LABS directly responds to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s 2024 call to accelerate semiconductor and electronics development. While Filipino engineers are widely praised in international R&D circles for their ingenuity and grit, the country still faces a local shortage of IC design talent—largely due to outdated curricula and a lack of specialized training in local universities.

Avondo believes it's time to bring that innovation back home. "Filipino engineers are already trusted leaders in R&D teams abroad. Now, we're creating the infrastructure to nurture that same caliber of talent locally."

By offering industry-standard training and mentorship from one of Southeast



Mayor Ruffy Biazon
City Government of Muntinlupa

Asia's top IC design firms, LABS by Xinyx is bridging the education-to-employment divide in one of the most high-value sectors in tech.

Muntinlupa as a Microelectronics Epicenter

The program's home base in Muntinlupa City is no accident. With 13 microelectronics companies operating in the area and institutions like Colegio de Muntinlupa equipped with industry-grade laboratories, the city is quickly becoming a nucleus for microelectronics education and innovation.

During the launch, the presence of national and local government officials—including Muntinlupa Mayor Hon. Ruffy Biazon, TESDA Deputy Director General Nelly Dillera, and DTI-BOI Director Corieh Dichosa—signaled institutional support for the program's vision. Also present were stakeholders from the Private Sector Advisory Council, the

Asian Development Bank, and academic leaders eager to expand IC Design education across the country.

Unlocking the Next Generation of Design Talent

IC Design may not be as widely recognized as coding or app development, but it is a crucial enabler of everything from smart devices and renewable energy to advanced medical equipment and space exploration. By focusing on this underrepresented but high-impact field,

LABS by Xinyx opens a career path that's both technically rigorous and globally in demand.

The platform doesn't just train engineers—it empowers innovators.

With the launch of LABS by Xinyx, the Philippines takes a confident step toward design-led semiconductor leadership in Asia. The promise is clear: a new generation of Filipino engineers equipped not just to build technology, but to help define it.





PLDT UNVEILS FIRST AI-READY HYPERSCALE DATA CENTER IN PH

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and PLDT Chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan led the inauguration of VITRO Sta. Rosa (VSR), the country's first hyperscale data center built specifically for Artificial Intelligence (AI) workloads.

Located in Laguna's fast-growing tech corridor, VSR is developed by VITRO Inc., a subsidiary of ePLDT and the data center arm of PLDT.

"The inauguration of VSR signals the country's readiness to attract the world's largest technology companies and showcase our regional competitiveness in the digital space. More than that, this technological development is an investment in the future of every Filipino," President Marcos said.

"We do intend to expand our data center capability for up to 500 MW. We

have to be at least equal to the capacity of Malaysia... You have our pledge, Mr. President, to make the Philippines a data center hub," Pangilinan said.

Operational since July 2024, the 50-megawatt facility is now home to telecom providers, enterprises, and global cloud technology companies. It sets a new standard for secure, high-performance, AI-ready infrastructure in the Philippines.

At the heart of its AI capabilities are NVIDIA-powered GPU servers hosted within VSR. Through these, ePLDT offers GPU as a Service (GPUaaS)—a first in the country. This on-demand computing model enables businesses to access powerful AI tools without heavy upfront investment. Through this service, those in banking, fintech, healthcare, logistics, and government can build and scale AI applications faster, more securely, and at lower cost.

VSR is fully integrated into PLDT's domestic fiber footprint and linked globally via international cable systems including Jupiter, Asia Direct Cable, and the upcoming Apricot. Its carrier-neutral design also allows connections to multiple telcos, ensuring robust network diversity and resilience.

As AI adoption accelerates globally, VSR strengthens the Philippines' bid to become a regional hub for digital innovation. It supports the country's ambitions to attract global investment, foster local tech development, and drive economic growth.

PLDT Group's investment in data centers and connectivity aligns with its mission to bridge the digital divide, expand access to technology, and contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals—particularly SDG 9 on industry, innovation, and infrastructure.

ACER REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION WITH INAUGURAL ACER EDU SUMMIT ASIA PACIFIC 2025



Acer hosted its inaugural Acer Edu Summit Asia Pacific 2025, a two-day event held from May 7 to 8, 2025, at the Renaissance Bangkok Ratchaprasong Hotel. With the theme, “Shaping Tomorrow: AI and Digital Technologies in Education,” the summit brought together delegates from the Philippines, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Australia, South Korea, India, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Taiwan to foster a deeper understanding of the role of AI and digitalization in education.

The digitalization of learning, amplified by the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI), is transforming education through revolutionary learning experiences.

The summit provided a platform for educators, policymakers, and tech luminaries to share practical insights on integrating cutting-edge technology into classrooms, promoting digital literacy, and preparing students for a tech-powered future. It also highlighted how Acer’s ecosystem of AI-powered devices,

digital education solutions, and EdTech innovations can support teaching methodologies, streamline administrative tasks, and enhance student engagement.

“Digitalization has demonstrated its capabilities to complement, enrich, and transform education, and Acer created this summit as a catalyst for innovation,” said Andrew Hou, Acer Pan Asia Pacific president.

Key event highlights included interactive booths from Intel, Windows, and Google, while Aopen, SpatialLabs, and Predator Gaming showcased how esports can be utilized in an educational setting. Altos also unveiled its latest advancements in AI server technology, showcasing powerful systems created to meet the increasing demands of generative AI and large-scale model training.

The spotlight fell on two high-performance platforms:

Altos BrainSphere™ R680 F7 – A versatile system built to support up to

eight NVIDIA RTX™ 6000 Blackwell Server Edition GPUs, ideal for compute-intensive, graphics-rich, and AI-driven workloads.

Altos BrainSphere™ R880 F7 – Designed for next-generation scalability, this HGX-based platform is optimized for Large Language Model (LLM) training and Generative AI, leveraging the breakthrough NVIDIA B200 Blackwell Ultra GPU. With energy-efficient design and massive compute power, these platforms reflect Altos’ strategic focus on empowering AI innovation across education, enterprise, and research sectors.

“The Acer Edu Summit Asia Pacific 2025 reinforces Acer’s commitment to equipping educators and learners with tools that not only enhance education today but also prepare them for the evolving digital landscape of tomorrow,” said Andrew Hou.

For more information, visit www.acer.com/us-en/education.

PAG-IBIG RAISES CASH LOAN ENTITLEMENT, EASES ACCESS FOR MEMBERS

Pag-IBIG Fund has upgraded its popular Multi-Purpose Loan (MPL), enabling members to borrow more, qualify sooner, and enjoy increased flexibility, affirming its dedication to supporting the financial needs of Filipino workers.

Under the improved Pag-IBIG MPL, members can now borrow up to 90% of their total Pag-IBIG Regular Savings—12.5% more than the previous 80%. For members with upgraded Regular Savings, this means they can secure even larger loans, as loan entitlement is directly based on their total savings. This increase ensures members have greater access to financial resources when needed most. These enhancements—higher loan amounts and shortened eligibility—also apply to other Pag-IBIG Short-Term Loan programs, specifically the Health and Education Loan Programs (HELPS) and the Calamity Loan.

In addition to higher loan amounts, eligibility requirements have also been enhanced. Members now qualify after contributing for just 12 months, down from the previous 24-month requirement. This reduction allows newer members to swiftly access funds for their immediate financial needs. Meanwhile, members with existing loans under the previous guidelines may still apply for an additional loan under the enhanced Pag-IBIG MPL, should they require extra funds as a result of the increased loan entitlement. The enhancements shall become available to members starting May 16.

“We are continually enhancing our loan programs in response to what our members need most,” said Secretary Jose Rizalino L. Acuzar, chairperson

Pag-IBIG Raises Cash Loan Entitlement,
Eases Access for Members

STARTING 16 MAY 2025

BORROW UP TO 90%
of your REGULAR SAVINGS

ONLY 12 MONTHLY SAVINGS TO QUALIFY

Pag-IBIG MULTI-PURPOSE LOAN

of the 11-member Pag-IBIG Fund Board of Trustees and head of the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development. “These latest improvements are aligned with President Marcos’ directive to deliver affordable and accessible financial services to Filipino workers. By offering bigger loans and reducing the eligibility period, we are making sure that more members can benefit quickly and effectively from the MPL.”

The upgraded Pag-IBIG MPL also introduces a new one-year repayment term, complementing the existing two- and three-year options. This additional term provides greater flexibility, allowing members to tailor their loan repayments according to their individual financial capacity.

Pag-IBIG Fund chief executive officer Marilene C. Acosta highlighted that amid these enhancements, the loan remains affordable, with a competitive monthly interest rate of only 1.4583%. Additionally, the majority of the interest earned from MPL repayments is returned to members as dividends, further benefiting them.

“Our enhanced MPL reflects Pag-IBIG Fund’s commitment to financial inclusivity and responsiveness to the

needs of our labor sector,” Acosta said. “We know members rely on these loans to start a small business, pay for tuition fees, cover medical expenses, undertake minor home improvements, or purchase furniture and other necessities. These changes mean our members can now more easily achieve their financial goals with greater ease and convenience.”

In 2024 alone, Pag-IBIG Fund released PHP70.3 billion in cash loans to more than 3.2 million members—the highest amount disbursed in a single year—underscoring the strong and growing trust of members in the program and the agency. Building on this momentum, Pag-IBIG Fund aims to assist an estimated 3.6 million members in 2025, with projected cash loan releases reaching PHP95.3 billion, as it continues to expand its reach and deliver accessible financial support to more Filipino workers.

“We strive to continuously evolve and respond effectively to the changing financial needs of our members,” Acosta added. “With these MPL enhancements, Pag-IBIG Fund further solidifies its role as a reliable partner in empowering Filipino workers toward greater financial stability and peace of mind.”

CIBI LAUNCHES FRAUD BUREAU TO UNITE FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AGAINST RISING CYBERCRIME

Cybercrime continues to be a rapidly rising threat, with cases in the Philippines tripling to 10,004 in 2024, according to the Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center (CICC). CIBI Information Inc., the country's first and only local credit bureau, recognizing the urgent need for a coordinated, data-driven approach to fight cybercrime, officially launches the Fraud Bureau.

The Fraud Bureau is a collaborative initiative that unites banks, fintechs, and financial institutions to share data on potentially deceptive applicant activity securely. This data includes watchlist or blacklist information, as well as details from incoming applications and inquiries.

The Fraud Bureau is poised to become a vital platform for financial institutions to share intelligence and collaborate in fighting fraud. By compiling resources, the Fraud Bureau promotes proactive detection, speeds up identification, and strengthens cybercrime prevention efforts across the financial sector. This initiative aims to curb fraudulent activity within the country's financial ecosystem by sharing data among key financial institutions, ultimately fostering greater trust and transparency across the industry.

"The significant increase in fraudulent activity highlights the urgent need for coordinated action. CIBI recognizes that data-driven collaboration is essential to tackling fraud—an insight that helped shape the Bureau's framework and mission. This collaborative approach strengthens industry-wide defenses and supports



CIBI kicked off its Fraud Bureau, bringing together banks, fintech companies, and financial leaders to create a unified defense against fraud.

greater trust and transparency in the financial ecosystem," said CIBI president and CEO Pia Arellano.

Responsible fintech innovation As the Philippines' leading credit reporting agency, CIBI aims to advance financial inclusion by providing reliable data-driven insights to enable informed decisions for businesses and consumers in the Philippines. By partnering with like-minded organizations, CIBI enhances the effectiveness of shared information, driving stronger fraud prevention and greater transparency in the Philippine financial ecosystem.

Participating in initiatives like the Fraud Bureau allows financial sector players to enhance defenses against fraud and contribute to a safer, more transparent system. Through data sharing and collaboration, they can protect consumers and make a

tangible impact in the fight against fraud.

"This initiative marks a meaningful step toward empowering Filipinos and fostering sustainable progress through responsible fintech innovation. By collectively combating fraud, we not only protect consumers but also build confidence in digital financial services—enabling broader adoption, financial inclusion, and long-term resilience in the country's evolving fintech landscape," said CIBI President and CEO Pia Arellano.

CIBI invites fintech companies to join its Fraud Bureau and become part of a shared defense network. Through data sharing and real-time alerts, members help protect both their businesses and the broader financial ecosystem. Contact CIBI through their website or fill up the form to learn more about the Fraud Bureau.



DEWEY DECIMAL SYSTEM

Words by Jose Alvarez

When you go back to school, there is something as inevitable as death and taxes: spending time in the library. Libraries hold a lot of physical and digital media. For those who haven't been to a library in a while, I recall searching for books via a card catalog (this was prevalent even in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when I was still in school), with computer searches available alongside physical card searches. One of the methods libraries use to classify and organize books is the Dewey Decimal Classification, also known as the Dewey Decimal System. Who made this method of searching for books in the library, and why is it so integral to our educational experience?

The Dewey Decimal System gets its name from Melvil Dewey, an American librarian who claimed to also be a reformer. He developed his idea of a classification system in 1873 while working at the library of Amherst College. In 1876, he published his ideas in a pamphlet titled *A Classification and Subject Index for Cataloguing and Arranging the Books and Pamphlets of a Library*. He used this pamphlet to promote his ideas to other librarians and sought feedback for his ideas. However, it is unclear how many people read or commented on his pamphlet, as only one copy with comments survived. The same year, he applied for and received a copyright on the first edition of his index, which totaled 44 pages, 2,000 index entries, and had 200 copies printed.

Numerous other editions were printed, with formal adoption beginning in 1885, when the second edition was published. Dewey claimed that over 100 people offered criticism and suggestions for his format. What made it innovative was that the positioning of books was done in relation to other books on similar topics. Previously, most libraries would arrange the books based on height and acquisition, which, by today's standards, would make no sense. Dewey even made an abridged version of his system in 1894 to help smaller libraries adapt. Others approached Dewey to translate his classification into French in 1895, and by the time of Dewey's death in 1931, 12 unabridged versions and four abridged versions had been published.

How does the system work? First, it follows a hierarchical classification structure comprising ten classes, which are themselves divided into ten divisions. As for this writing, the ten major classes, notated by call numbers in parentheses, include Computer Science, Information, & General Works (000), Philosophy & Psychology (100), Religion (200), Social Sciences (300), Language (400), Science (500), Technology (600), Arts & Recreation (700), Literature (800), and History & Geography (900), covering nearly all subjects you might learn in school. The following three numbers note the discipline regarding the class. For example, a book about Jesus Christ would be notated under Religion (200),

001-099	Generalities	PREQUEL TO THE DEWEY DECIMAL SYSTEM	Encyclopedias, curiosities and wonders, unexplained mysteries
100-199	Philosophy	WHO AM I?	Books about the self, feelings, dreams, witchcraft
200-299	Religion	WHO MADE ME?	Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc., and Mythology
300-399	Social Science	WHO'S THE GUY IN THE NEXT CAVE?	Customs, cultures, laws, manners, costumes, fairy tales
400-499	Languages	HOW DO I TALK TO THAT GUY?	Dictionaries, parts of speech, sign language, foreign language aids
500-599	Natural Science	LET'S TALK ABOUT THE WORLD WE SEE	Mathematics, earth, astronomy, chemistry, plants, wild animals
600-699	Applied Science	NOW LET'S MAKE STUFF OUT OF WHAT WE SEE	Inventions, robots, transportation, pets, recipe books
700-799	Arts and Recreation	NOW LET'S HAVE SOME FUN	Art, drawing, comics, handicrafts, music, games, sports
800-899	Literature	LET'S TELL OUR CHILDREN HOW WONDERFUL WE ARE	Poetry, plays, classic literature, jokes, riddles
900-999	Geography and History	LET'S TELL OUR FUTURE CHILDREN HOW WONDERFUL WE WERE	Landforms, travel, atlases, exploration, countries
92 and 920	Biography and Collective Biography	FIND OUT ABOUT FAMOUS PEOPLE	Single person: filed by last name of subject Multiple people: by author

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Melvil Dewey, an American librarian who claimed to also be a reformer.

specifically the call number 232. However, to learn about Jesus Christ as a historical figure, the call number would be 232.908. 232 is referred to as the main subject, and the number after the decimal point represents a specific topic. There is a third classification called the Cutter number, which is often based on the author's last name or title (i.e., the letter in T39 can either indicate the author's last name or the title of the book). The Cutter number is named after Charles Ammi Cutter, who also developed a classification system alongside Dewey's system.

While an article on the Dewey Decimal System can run far longer than this space allows, after Dewey's death in 1931, many libraries found the abridged system to be insufficient, but the full edition to be too cumbersome. The 15th edition, published in 1951, significantly reduced the size of the full edition from 1,900 pages to only 700. An advisory committee was formed for the 16th and 17th editions (1958 and 1965, respectively). By 1993, the first electronic version of the Dewey Decimal System was released; however, hard copy editions are still published to this day. The last major revision to the Dewey Decimal System occurred in 2011.

While the Dewey Decimal System may be daunting to this generation of students, it is vital to know how to navigate the library and become the best student that you can be. While this can be done online today, understanding the origins of this complicated yet effective system can help you better comprehend the library and become a more effective student, potentially leading to an even more effective system in the future.

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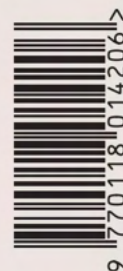


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